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New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

The Honourable Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sogavare (Solomon Islands): At the outset, let me express my sincere felicitations and those of my Government and the people of the Solomon Islands, on your election, Sir, as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. As you know, the Republic of Korea and Solomon Islands enjoy very warm and cordial relations. My delegation is therefore delighted to see you presiding over this Assembly. Our gratitude also goes to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for the efficient manner in which he conducted the work of the previous session. I also congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his well-deserved reappointment for another term in office, and on the award, to him and to the United Nations, of the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize.

The horrendous terrorist attack on the United States on 11 September was an attack against humanity. What we witnessed on that day was unimaginable. It brought pain and loss on an inconceivable scale; there can be no justification for it. This morning I visited ground zero to pay my respects to the thousands of innocent people buried there and to reaffirm the solidarity of Solomon Islands with the Government and the people of the United States of America.

Terrorism is an evil phenomenon which must be eradicated. Individuals and organizations perpetrating such evil must be brought to justice. Similarly, States that harbour or provide safe haven for terrorist activities must play their full part in eradicating this menace.

The war against international terrorism must aim to have far-reaching solutions, rather than be merely reactive. Effective international cooperation is critical to the global implementation of anti-terrorism measures, in order to deny terrorists any weak spots that they could exploit to launch their criminal operations. Solomon Islands is taking steps towards the ratification of the various international conventions against terrorism. Countries such as mine need technical support in law enforcement, surveillance and information-sharing so as to effectively implement these instruments. In this regard, I welcome President Bush's offer to help countries that need assistance in

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strengthening and implementing anti-terrorism strategies.

While the war against terrorism is a matter of urgency, the United Nations should not underestimate the continuing need to address other global issues that also threaten human security. Persistent poverty and underdevelopment; environmental degradation; internal conflict and war; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as of small arms and light weapons; trade in illicit drugs; the deadly spread of HIV/AIDS; and violations of human rights are all complex global problems that continue to demand concerted global responses.

With their limited resources and capacity, small island developing States like Solomon Islands are unable to cope with the magnitude of these problems. Post-cold-war security now rightly embraces human, environmental, economic and political dimensions.

The inter-ethnic crisis that the Solomon Islands experienced between 1998 and 2000, and its devastating impact on the country, is a sobering reminder that peace and development are intrinsically linked. One cannot be achieved if the other fails. In most situations, including in our case, peace takes precedence, as no rebuilding is possible without security and stability. My Government has worked resolutely to bring the warring factions to the table. Our efforts culminated in the signing of the Townsville Peace Agreement in October 2000 and of the Marau Peace Agreement earlier this year.

The Townsville Agreement led to the cessation of the conflict. However, progress in the implementation of the Agreement's disarmament provisions has been slow. With a considerable number of high-powered weapons still to be handed in, the peace process remains fragile. A review of the Agreement was begun recently, but it has been temporarily suspended. We are confident that the review process will soon resume in order to positively consolidate the ongoing peace process.

Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

At this juncture, I wish to acknowledge the contributions of our development partners towards the peace process, in particular the Governments of the Republic of China on Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand and the countries of the European Union. My Government is also grateful to civil society institutions, including the churches and non-governmental organizations, for their efforts, especially at the height of the crisis.

The challenge is far from over. With a shattered economy and a delicate peace process, the task of rebuilding the country and ensuring lasting peace is formidable. It requires the patience, cooperation and commitment of all Solomon Islanders. My Government has adopted a National Peace Plan and Programme of Action aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict through meaningful dialogue and discussion and by encouraging a more participatory approach in the country's socio-economic and political development. The recent ruling by our judiciary affirming the constitutional legitimacy of my Government has given us additional resolve to implement this Plan and Programme of Action. In this connection, the understanding and support of the international community, in particular our development partners, is important.

Development cooperation should strive to reduce the vulnerability of societies to violent conflicts. Aid should go beyond immediate humanitarian needs. It has to be linked to peace-building initiatives in order to make peace sustainable. Development assistance could, therefore, be a means of conflict prevention and an instrument for peace-building.

There is a clear imperative to address the poverty and inequality that exist among our countries. But there is also an irrefutable common interest for doing so, as many of today's problems — especially in the least developed countries — are rooted in underdevelopment and poverty. The timely implementation of the outcomes of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries is therefore imperative. We are fully aware that primary responsibility to put in place the necessary reforms for poverty reduction and economic growth lies with the least developed countries. Education, infrastructure development and improving basic health services remain priority issues for Solomon Islands.

Undoubtedly, investment of overseas development assistance resources to support our efforts can accelerate development. Donor countries and agencies must be more inclined to ensure that they do not give with one hand, only to take away with the other. In a globalizing world, donor partners' policies

in virtually every sector — including trade and investment, financial systems and the environment — must help promote development for the poorest. In the absence of that, the goal of attaining sustainable development and managing globalization in a way that maximizes its benefits for all will be difficult to realize.

In the same spirit, I call on the development partners to consider more practical and realistic measures to deal with the huge amount of debt burden that poor countries continue to shoulder. Development partners must continue to positively consider measures such as writing off debts; for even the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and the Paris Club initiatives to address the problems of highly indebted and poor developing countries have been cumbersome and slow.

The International Conference on Financing for Development, which is to be held in Mexico next March, offers a unique opportunity for achieving consensus on how to mobilize new and additional resources for development. Solomon Islands looks forward to participating actively in the Conference.

Agenda 21 remains a valid blueprint for the management of the Earth's environment and the sustainable development of its resources. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg next year, 10 years after Rio, should reach consensus on ways and means to ensure wider and effective implementation of Agenda 21 and subsequent international programmes, including the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The ocean and its bounty continue to be a principal resource for Solomon Islands. Our priorities concerning oceans include sustainable fisheries management, habitat protection and avoidance of marine pollution. For us, the success of national development planning depends significantly on the continued health of the marine environment.

The unique circumstances of small island developing States must be fully understood by the international community as we strive to address the serious threats of natural disasters, climate change and sea-level rise. The Kyoto Protocol remains a significant first step on the path to ensuring effective global action to combat climate change. The international community must now build on the outcomes of the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention and work further towards the resolution of all outstanding negotiating issues.

We must recall the vision which the United Nations was created to serve, i.e. that each and every human being deserves to live in dignity, be well nourished, be educated, have access to decent health care and decent work, be respected and consulted, and be able to develop their talents and creativity. Our challenge is to strengthen the United Nations and other international institutions to strive more effectively towards that vision. Solomon Islands remains committed to the reform initiatives of the Secretary-General.

This session should also continue with efforts to make the work of the General Assembly more efficient and effective. Furthermore, discussions on the reform of the Security Council have gone on for too long without substantial progress. Greater flexibility is required in order for this process to be completed. The goal is to have a more democratic, transparent and effective Security Council.

In what is surely one of the bitter ironies of our times, free and democratic Taiwan, home to 23 million people and a peace-loving country, has been excluded not only from the United Nations and all its specialized agencies but also from nearly every other intergovernmental organization in the world. Although the Republic of China on Taiwan willingly abides by international norms, standards and obligations, it is not able to enjoy the same normal standard privileges and treatment accorded to others. This is simply unfair and unjust. The time has come to reconsider the exclusion of the Republic of China from the United Nations. The Republic of China on Taiwan was a founding member of the Organization. It is a model of economic success and democratic politics. Taiwan has continued to share its development experiences with the wider international community when given the opportunity. Its continuing assistance during humanitarian crises also deserves full commendation.

Solomon Islands' appeal for Taiwan's representation and participation in the United Nations system is premised on the principles of justice, dignity and the right of the people of Taiwan to be heard and represented in the international arena and for them to be able to enjoy the same benefits that the rest of us enjoy. My Government firmly believes that Taiwan's

membership in the United Nations will effectively serve to facilitate peaceful dialogue between the two Chinas and provide a solid basis for a lasting reconciliation between them. Dialogue is the only means to resolve differences, and parity and mutual respect must be the foundation upon which both sides can build trust and confidence. The United Nations is the best forum to nurture that trust and confidence. The issue of Taiwan's membership is consistent with the United Nations principle of universality. But, above all, it must be acknowledged that the Republic of China on Taiwan is fully committed to fulfilling the obligations of the United Nations Charter.

Finally, next month my country is going to the polls to elect a new parliament, and thereafter a new Government will be formed. This election manifests our continuing commitment to constitutional and parliamentary democracy. It is a critical election, as it will confer a new mandate for the next Government to continue with the ever-important responsibilities of ensuring the rule of law, rebuilding the economy and further consolidating the current peace process.

Those are difficult tasks, but we are determined to write a new page in our young history — a new page that should provide for ethnic harmony and co-existence, comprehensive and lasting peace, economic prosperity, and, above all, engender and nurture a better future and hope for our children and future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Osmonakun Ibraimov, State Secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the State Secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Osmonakun Ibraimov, State Secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Osmonakun Ibraimov, State Secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Ibraimov (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like at the outset to join in all the congratulations that have been extended to the President on his election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I would like to assure him that our delegation is ready to cooperate fully with him and also to wish him, on behalf of the Kyrgyz delegation, success in carrying out his duties.

Our delegation would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his re-election to a second term of office and also on his winning the Nobel Peace Prize, together with the United Nations, this year. We consider that this award was well deserved.

The work of this session is taking place at an extremely complex time for the international community. Today, from this lofty rostrum, on behalf of the people of Kyrgyzstan, I convey our deepest condolences to the people and the Government of the United States in connection with the tragic events of 11 September this year, which claimed many victims.

Terrorism has laid down an extremely dangerous challenge to all of civilized humanity, democracy and freedom. In this context, the efforts of the international community aimed at combating terrorism, first and foremost within the framework of the United Nations, are fully supported by Kyrgyzstan, and our Government is taking all necessary measures to implement Security Council resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001). From the very outset, we have supported and will continue to support the activities of the United States and other countries within the anti-terrorist coalition, and consider the military operations to be inevitable and justified actions.

Our position of principle with respect to terrorism stems from Kyrgyzstan's position at the epicentre of the struggle against international terrorism and against the illegal trafficking in drugs and weapons, which are a threat to the stability and security not only of the Central Asian region but of the entire civilized world. Our country has for three years been defending itself against incursions by terrorist bands that have resulted in the deaths of entirely innocent people. If it had not been for our firm determination to take a stand against terrorism and keep a firm lock on our borders, then serious destabilization of the entire region would have been inevitable. We do not wish to exaggerate our role, but it is we who have prevented the terrorists from

crossing our borders into other countries. I would also like to note that Kyrgyzstan has also made its territory available and the necessary transport vehicles for the transit of international humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan on the Osh-Ishkashim-Faizabad road.

A serious problem for us is that of refugees who have come to the territory of our Republic from the region of the conflict. Kyrgyzstan already hosts approximately 2,000 Afghan refugees. Their numbers could increase very rapidly. All of this is a very serious problem, and finding a solution will require active assistance from the relevant international organizations.

Over the last few years we have all seen Afghanistan become a sanctuary for various international terrorist organizations. After the fall of Kabul yesterday, the inter-Afghan conflict has entered a completely new phase. Moreover, it is now more urgent than ever to deal with the question of a mutually acceptable solution to untie the Afghan knot. Kyrgyzstan proceeds from a deep understanding of the need for rapidly winding up the military confrontation in Afghanistan, with the subsequent formation in that long-suffering country of a broadly representative, multi-ethnic Government, that, first and foremost, meets the interests and aspirations of the Afghan people.

In this connection, Kyrgyzstan welcomes constructive ideas and proposals aimed at establishing a long-awaited peace in Afghanistan. For our part, we consistently express our readiness to cooperate with all the countries involved in order to settle the Afghan conflict. We consider that it is precisely the United Nations, with its experience, capabilities and institutional potential, that should play a key role in bringing together the efforts of the international community to combat terrorism. In this regard, Kyrgyzstan proposes the creation of a special committee of the United Nations to restore peace and stability in Afghanistan, which could be a coordinating body for all the practical measures to this end.

Today we would like to recall one of the well-known initiatives of the President of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akayev, to hold a forum for dialogue on security questions between the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It seems to us that there is now an urgent need for such a dialogue between these two authoritative organizations. In this connection, Kyrgyzstan took the very important initiative to hold on 13-14 December of this year, under the aegis of the OSCE in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, an international conference on enhancing security and stability in Central Asia and strengthening comprehensive efforts to counter terrorism. We are now making active preparations, together with the secretariat of the OSCE, for this important measure. In our view, the participation of the United Nations in that event would facilitate a consolidated solution for working out joint approaches to combating terrorism. This would be an important step in strengthening the international community's capacity to avert the threat to security in Central Asia, including by expanding the assistance to countries in that region in the face of the growing threat. It is encouraging to note that many States, including participants in the anti-terrorist coalition, are showing serious interest in the Bishkek international conference to combat terrorism.

Kyrgyzstan attaches great importance to questions of sustainable development. In this regard, my delegation greatly appreciates the decision of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly to hold a World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. It is a pleasure to note that Kyrgyzstan made a very significant contribution to the preparation of the Rio + 10 summit on problems of sustainable development, having organized, together with the United Nations Secretariat, in Bishkek, a regional round table. The results of the round table will certainly be reflected in the key documents of the World Summit in Johannesburg.

As we well know, the United Nations has proclaimed next year the International Year of Mountains. This is certainly a very important and productive initiative on a global level. We, the members of the delegation of Kyrgyz Republic, can indeed be proud that one of the most important initiatives of the International Year of Mountains was taken by our President, Askar Akayev.

It is indeed true that the mountains of the world are a symbol of the lofty ideals of humankind, but mountains also pose related ecological, economic and social problems for the people living in those areas. High mountains should not cause these problems for their inhabitants. I fully agree fully with Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the Foreign Minister of Austria, that the International Year of Mountains should be a year

for new initiatives for exchanging experience and drafting new programmes of cooperation.

The acuity of the ecological problems of mountainous areas and their connection to economic problems led our specialists to examine international experience in order to see how to restructure our debts by seeking debt-relief in exchange for ecological initiatives. We feel that this approach provides a unique opportunity for financing national ecological and environmental projects and economic investment programmes. We should also like to express the hope that at the upcoming International Conference on Financing for Development in Mexico, sufficient attention will be given to the specific problems of mountainous countries.

We wish to take this opportunity to welcome the decision of Member States to hold an official opening ceremony for the International Year of Mountains in New York in December of next year. We also note with great satisfaction that in October 2002, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, will welcome representatives from all over the world for the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit. We are already preparing for this very important event, which will take place during the International Year of Mountains. We wish to express our hope that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, will be able participate in the Summit.

In conclusion, I should like to express our deep conviction that the efforts of United Nations Member States and the entire world community are aimed at implementing the ideals and principles enshrined in the Millennium Declaration and the United Nations Charter, and that they will lead to the triumph of peace, freedom and democracy.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the State Secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Osmonakun Ibraimov, State Secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Lieutenant-General. Mompati S. Merafhe, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Botswana.

Mr. Merafhe (Botswana): Before I deliver my statement, please allow me to express the heartfelt condolences of my delegation to the Governments of the United States of America and the Dominican Republic and to the families of the victims of the tragic air traffic accident in New York on Monday. During this time of grief and sadness, our sympathies are with those who lost their loved ones.

It is with great pleasure that I extend to the President and his country, the Republic of Korea, the warmest congratulations of my delegation on his election to the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. We are confident that under his able leadership, we will have a very productive session. The President can rest assured of the full cooperation of the delegation of Botswana in the discharge of the noble task entrusted to him.

I should also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland. The skilful manner in which he guided our deliberations during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly speaks for his wealth of diplomatic experience and diligence in his work.

To our Secretary-General, may I express the full support and confidence of my delegation as he begins a second term of office. We congratulate him for the highly esteemed Nobel Peace Prize for 2001, bestowed jointly on him and the United Nations system. This special award is not only to the Secretary-General, personally, but also to the many dedicated men and women who continue to work tirelessly for the United Nations system.

It is regrettable that even as we are assembled here to forge a common future within the same walls where just 12 months ago our leaders proclaimed the arrival of a brave new world full of hope and promise, our attention should be drawn to acts of international terrorism not far from where we are meeting.

My delegation wishes to add its voice to those of other speakers who have condemned, in the strongest language possible, the bombings that occurred in New York and Washington, resulting in a huge loss of human life. Immediately after learning of these attacks, my Government issued a statement in which we condemned these terrorist attacks and those who conceived and perpetrated them. A unified and concerted effort is required from the international community in order to wipe the scourge of international terrorism from the face of the earth, once and for all.

Among other things, we need to reaffirm our commitment to the full implementation of all conventions on combating terrorism. My delegation is convinced that the international community collectively has the resources necessary to win the war against terrorism. This is a challenge of our age.

The other major challenge that presents extraordinary danger to humanity is the HIV/AIDS pandemic, whose devastating impact on our societies and our economies, particularly in Africa, is well documented.

According to recent estimates, of the 36.1 million people living with HIV globally, 25.3 million are in sub-Saharan Africa. Of the 5.3 million people infected with the virus during 2000, 3.8 million were in sub-Saharan Africa. Of the 3.0 million people who died of HIV/AIDS in 2000, 2.4 million were in sub-Saharan Africa. These statistics present an extremely grim picture of the HIV/AIDS situation in sub-Saharan Africa. As delegates are no doubt aware, my country is one of the worst affected on the continent. Unless we join forces to tackle this pandemic, it will continue to have a devastating impact on our societies and economies. Funding for the HIV/AIDS programmes is grossly inadequate and has to be increased in order to mitigate the impact of the scourge.

Indeed, the twenty-sixth special session of the United Nations General Assembly underscored the imperative of intensified global action to combat the pandemic. The Global HIV/AIDS and Health Fund could not have come at a more opportune time. It is our sincere hope, therefore, that the donor community will respond positively to the financing of the trust fund.

I want to stress the need to strengthen the role of the United Nations in this fight. Our efforts for the prevention and treatment of the disease need to be augmented and strengthened by concrete measures of support and resources from the international community if we are to turn the tide of the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The third issue I wish to highlight is that of "conflict diamonds" versus "development diamonds". Botswana deplores the fact that diamond resources in a number of countries in Africa are being plundered by rebels to purchase weapons that are used to cause enormous suffering to innocent people.

However, I want to underscore the fact that "conflict diamonds" constitute only 4 per cent or less of the world trade in diamonds. Legitimate, conflict-free diamonds, such as those produced in my country, are used to generate socio-economic growth and development. I am glad that the contribution of conflict-free diamonds to the economic growth of countries such as mine, and indeed of other countries in Southern Africa, is being appreciated.

We have been active participants in the Kimberly Process, in which Governments of diamond-producing countries of Southern Africa and other interested Governments, the diamond industry and civil society organizations are working together to institute a certification scheme designed to eliminate that small percentage of conflict diamonds from world trade. We sincerely want to see the suffering inflicted upon the people of Angola, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and others brought to an end.

Regrettably, many more countries in our continent continue to be torn apart by war and conflict. We applaud the efforts of the United Nations and other international players to enhance the capacity of African countries to prevent conflict and maintain peace and stability in the continent. We are convinced that the determination of many in Africa to consolidate democracy will go a long way towards ensuring that conditions of security and stability are instituted throughout the continent. The establishment of the African Union, which will be launched next year in the Republic of South Africa, is the most positive expression of a new solidarity, based on an urgent search for collective economic security and political partnership. Without underestimating the hurdles we still face as we move our continent towards integration, it is our fervent belief that an era of hope has been ushered in on our continent.

The most talked about undertaking by Africa in recent weeks has been the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is aimed at achieving socio-economic development by alleviating poverty as well as promoting peace, security, democracy and good governance. Unlike other initiatives that came before it, the New Partnership for Africa's Development challenges African countries to take primary responsibility for their own development by ushering in a political environment guaranteeing peace, security and stability, respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law.

The initiative underscores the need for a policy framework and, indeed, regulatory structures that will enhance governance in Africa. I must say, all of these are achievable objectives, and we as a continent have unreservedly committed ourselves, our Governments and peoples, and the required resources to their attainment. We also believe that the initiative will usher in a new concept of technical cooperation between Africa and our development partners, and that the United Nations will have a critical role to play in its implementation.

My delegation attaches importance to the International Conference on Financing for Development, scheduled to be held in Mexico in the spring of 2002, and the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in South Africa in September 2002. These Conferences will offer us an opportunity to examine issues of development in a holistic and pragmatic manner. Issues of environment, trade, domestic policy-making, international cooperation and partnership with the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the private sector, will have to feature prominently at these conferences.

Recent developments in Sierra Leone give us hope that peace will now be given a chance in that country. The agreement between the Government and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which will see the latter transformed into a political party, is a major achievement and an important step forward. The RUF must now translate its promises into action, because this is the only way that the international community will be able to provide the much needed support for the holding of the envisaged national elections, which will provide the basis for the restoration of peace and stability in Sierra Leone.

There is a real window of opportunity for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After many years of bloody conflict, which has inflicted immense suffering on the people of the Congo, the political players and other stakeholders have embarked on a national dialogue that should bring peace to the country. I would like to underline the fact that dedication and perseverance will be required on the part of those concerned in order for the inter-Congolese dialogue to be crowned with success. We therefore urge the players to see the process of negotiations through, because the alternative is to slide back down into the suffering and misery that the Congolese have endured for so long. I also wish to call upon the international community to provide the necessary support and resources to the Office of the Facilitator, former President Sir Ketumile Masire, to enable the facilitation process of the inter-Congolese dialogue to succeed.

The peace process in Burundi is moving in the right direction after many years of painful war. The deal brokered by former President Mandela has provided a way out of the stalemate. The resolve of the parties to remain committed to the peace process is the only way forward.

We continue to be concerned that prospects for peace in Angola remain distant. At the heart of the impasse are UNITA's continuing acts of destabilization and sabotage. UNITA must understand that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Angola. We therefore wish to appeal to UNITA to reconsider its position and choose the path of dialogue.

My delegation is seriously concerned at the recent escalation of violence in the Middle East. It is our sincere hope that the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority will recognize the urgent need to resume negotiations towards a comprehensive peace agreement. A lasting solution to this problem is essential.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm my country's commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. We are committed to working with others to strengthen this Organization in order to surmount the challenges that face us all as nations and peoples across the globe. The United Nations is our only hope for a stable and prosperous world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

Mr. Oskanian (Armenia): Let me begin, Sir, by congratulating President Han Seung-soo on his election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I would like also to express our appreciation of and respect for Mr. Harri Holkeri for the professionalism and dedication with which he conducted the previous session.

Since the acts of terrorism on 11 September, each of us, as individuals and as leaders responsible for the future of our planet, has been trying to understand what happened — why and how. The universal condemnation of the arrogance and fascist mentality

that conceives and implements such terror could not have been more justified. The immediate determination that the perpetrators must be punished and their bases eliminated was necessary and prudent. The awareness that this is a long and complex process remains evident.

Scholars and analysts have attempted to explore and explain that day of terror, its causes and its ramifications. This is a necessary process that, if we are patient, will begin with more questions than answers. Listening will inevitably lead to dialogue, not just this year, but every year. If we are honest, this dialogue will reflect the fact that, although we all see quite plainly that there has been a change, we do not agree on what that change is or how it affects each of us.

There are those who believe that the world has been taken off the path of economic globalization and democratization. There are some who insist that the nature and course of international relations has irrevocably changed — that the world order, as it existed, has come crashing down. That may be the inescapable, though illusory, initial reaction. It may appear that bilateral and multilateral relations have been fundamentally and involuntarily re-tailored.

Yet if this perception becomes more than a natural temporary reaction — if the terrorists succeed in intimidating us, and force us to take actions that are not in our best interests, causing us to abandon principles and agendas — then the terrorists will have succeeded. They will have terrorized their way to setting agendas and determining policies. But just as New Yorkers have vowed continued allegiance to their city and their way of life, the international community, too, must remain true to its structures, traditions and agenda.

That is not to say, however, that life has returned to business as usual, or that it can do so. It certainly cannot return to thinking as usual. Our allied approach to the problems and realities that we collectively face requires genuine, radical rethinking. The deep dissatisfaction, injustice, poverty and hopelessness — which do not justify terror but serve to validate it, legitimize it and guard it — must be addressed and eradicated, too. These deep-problems must be replaced by equality, education, social justice, women's and children's human rights, civil liberties and democracy.

Armenia readily joined the global struggle to eradicate the terrorism network because the success of this effort is as important for us as it is for the coalition leaders. However, Armenia asks that, in our effort and exercise of responsibility, to neutralize this enemy, we be careful about our own definitions and labels. Just as it is crucial to ensure solidarity in the united battle against the evil of terrorism, a divergence of interpretative opinion or varied agendas should not be construed as lack of solidarity.

Just as the coalition leaders are concerned about the effects of terrorism on their countries, peoples, lifestyles and values, Armenia is concerned about how the advent of such terror, and the extended battle against it, will affect our region and our country. The war on terrorism has added a further dimension to our domestic and foreign policy agenda, not narrowed its focus. The economic and political conditions which make ours a volatile region have not gone away. Indeed, they have been exacerbated by the new alliances and priorities. Worse still, they might be further aggravated if they are ignored and allowed to lie latent while all attention is focused on the immediate danger. In focusing on the hatred of thousands, we do not want to dismiss the frustration and needs of millions, many of whom stand at the brink of war.

That is why, even as Armenia has offered unreserved cooperation with the global coalition, signed the United Nations and Council of Europe anti-terrorism conventions, and offered military and strategic assistance, we continue to insist that the fundamental short- and long-term developmental issues facing us also be dealt with. We are worried about the stability of our region, because the basic freedoms which are the hallmarks of modern society and which decrease the likelihood of violent social and political solutions are not universally guaranteed in our neighbourhood.

Security and peace around the world depend on stability in each region. If we are committed to world peace and security, each of us in our own region must take on the responsibility to address the outstanding issues in a new light, guided by new thinking. It remains for the leaders to abandon the expediency of realpolitik for the efficacy of "justpolitik". This is nothing that has not been said before, but perhaps in this new environment of searching, our call will not fall on deaf ears. Our region has the wealth, the traditions,

the opportunities and the links that can make it flourish and thrive.

As far as Armenia's contribution to peace and stability in the Caucasus is concerned, there are two intertwined issues affecting our relations with two of our neighbours. One is the absence of relations with Turkey, to the west; the other is the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, which affects our relations with Azerbaijan.

For the past 10 years, representatives of my Government have, from this podium, affirmed that basic freedoms of thought, belief, conviction, ethics, traditions, values and culture also apply to the men, women and children of Nagorny Karabakh. This lies at the heart of the conflict over Nagorny Karabakh. Azerbaijan's insistence on inventing numbers, redefining terms, creating history and obfuscating discussion are part of the problem, not the search for a solution. In response to the charges made today by my colleague from Azerbaijan with regard to Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh, let me say the following. Nagorny Karabakh has never been a part of independent Azerbaijan. Whether we consider history or geography, whether we adopt a long-term political perspective or face the reality of the facts on the ground, the men, women and children of Nagorny Karabakh have earned the right to live peacefully on their historic lands. For decades they have been denied that right. Today, a dozen years after the re-eruption of the conflict, the children of Karabakh have completed an entire school career free of alien domination and foreign occupation.

Justice for the people of Nagorny Karabakh has been at the core of Armenia's policies and actions, not just because we believe it is right, but also because we believe that, in order to achieve lasting peace, economic cooperation and political development, this conflict will have to be resolved fairly and fully. Azerbaijan's empty calls for a military solution, which arise from an adherence to old clichés rather than from new realities, are not acceptable among neighbours that are serious about peace.

As for our relations with Turkey, in this post-11 September world, when the cold war has truly and finally ended, where erstwhile adversaries have found reasons to put aside ideology and establish partnerships, perhaps Turkey will put aside preconditions in the interests of regional and world peace. Armenia would like to have normal, good-neighbourly relations with Turkey, and is hopeful that Turkey will establish diplomatic relations with Armenia, open the borders and engage in constructive cooperation.

But the obvious must be stated. The memory of the Armenian genocide continues to haunt and obstruct Turkey's relations with Armenia. However, we are confident that this issue can be addressed between the two Governments, through dialogue. The events of the past two months have reminded Armenians that man is indeed capable of immense, indescribable evil and that mass violence is not a thing of the past. Yet if we, as the victims of genocide, are unwilling to permit our own tragic past to define our actions in the future, we can confidently call on Turkey to do the same, and to join us as equal participants in a dialogue between our two peoples.

There is no doubt that the United Nations provides the most overarching and inclusive framework for creating the conditions that make States and peoples prefer peace to war. The United Nations — acting, where possible, with various multilateral and regional organizations — should identify and utilize the comparative advantage and specificity of each institution and each country as a potential fighter, as a potential instrument in the war for peace, and even as a potential victim.

The United Nations did not need 11 September to acknowledge economic development and poverty eradication as strategic battlefields in the war against terrorism. Donor countries can contribute to the success of this war by providing not only military forces, but also greater financial and technical assistance.

Such assistance must be coordinated. The new challenges call for the consolidation of existing mechanisms of international dialogue, cooperation and security. The United Nations can make a major contribution to this process, especially if it reflects, in a more equitable manner, the political and economic realities of today's world. We believe that real reform of the Security Council lies in the expansion of both categories: permanent and non-permanent. We support the desire of Germany and Japan to become permanent members of the Security Council.

Armenia also attaches great significance to the issue of equitable geographic representation, and hence it supports increased representation for underrepresented regions, especially Asia, Africa,

Latin America and the Caribbean. In this regard, Armenia is equally supportive of India's quest for permanent membership in the Security Council. We believe strongly that any increase in non-permanent membership should also ensure enhanced representation for the Group of Eastern European States through the allocation of one additional non-permanent seat.

Modern life has caused upheavals in static societies, and the answer lies not in any particular faith but in healthy, democratic institutions and legislation and viable economic systems.

Writer V. S. Naipaul made that assertion, and this year he was awarded a Nobel Prize, as was Secretary-General Kofi Annan. This choice of recipients provides much food for thought. Neither has been exclusivist; they have both been inclusive, as can be seen in their ability to bring their deep-rooted traditions to bear on the challenges facing our global society. While Naipaul the writer teases and provokes, Annan the diplomat challenges and soothes. They both do so with grace and from positions of strength. They can both afford to be more extreme in their pronouncements, but they are not.

The message here is that in this year of dialogue among civilizations, there are successful ways of merging the best of the world's traditions, even while challenging the world to move forward towards justice and democracy for all. Naipaul and Annan do not reject the failures of the world, but challenge us to address them. We, collectively, could do worse than to follow their example.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I call on His Excellency Mr. Koffi Panou, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Togo.

Mr. Panou (Togo) (*spoke in French*): The sudden speeding up of events that has taken place since the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly and their potential impact on the future of humankind only confirms our impression that our world is experiencing developments that could, one the one hand, open the door to hopes for peace, stability and progress, or, on the other, jeopardize these hopes and imperil prospects for a better world.

The threat is real. We therefore must mobilize our efforts to an even greater extent to ensure that the ideals of peace, solidarity, justice and tolerance can triumph throughout the world.

Hatred and intolerance took centre stage on 11 September, when the United States, our host country, was the target of terrorist acts of indescribable and unjustifiable barbarity.

In the face of the outrage and horror to which those events gave rise, the President of the Republic of Togo immediately condemned these heinous attacks, which he called a veritable declaration of war, and which, regrettably, caused the death of nationals of nearly 80 countries, including mine.

Once again, in paying tribute to all of those who lost their lives in the tragedy of 11 September and in conveying once again our deep condolences to the American people, I should like to express the fervent hope that, thanks to our collective efforts and to a greater solidarity in our actions, we will be able to defeat evil.

Because we have on several occasions been the victims of terrorist acts, Togo is aware of the significance and seriousness of the consequences of such acts of murderous violence, which are committed with complete disregard for respect for human life and for human dignity.

The joint combat against international terrorism, in all its manifestations and wherever necessary, is a task of great importance for the entire international community, because no one is safe from this scourge. This fight should not be understood as a confrontation between civilizations, cultures or religions. Identifying the true causes of this scourge and finding appropriate solutions to combat it — this is the true challenge that we must meet.

In this context, it is important to do everything we can to ensure the broadest possible participation of States in the strict application of the 12 international conventions dealing with specific aspects of terrorism and to step up negotiations on the comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

Likewise, it is essential for all States to cooperate closely with the mechanism has been set up by the Security Council pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) in order to combat this scourge in an efficient and coordination manner. My country is already complying with its responsibilities in the context of this process.

However, cooperation in eradicating this scourge needs to be strengthened at the regional level as well. Thus our West African subregion notes with satisfaction that it has set up functional structures to combat terrorism, through the quadripartite agreement between Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria; and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Mutual Assistance, Protocol on Non-Aggression and Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security.

Before continuing my statement, I should like to join my voice to those of previous speakers in extending to Mr. Han, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, our warmest congratulations on his election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that, thanks to his experience and diplomatic skills, the work of this session will definitely be successful.

I should like also to extend my warmest congratulations to his illustrious predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, who so ably guided the work of the fifty-fifth session.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to pay well-deserved tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan. Thanks to his skill and his vision, our Organization has regained its credibility and its primary role in the management of international affairs. His unanimous re-election to a second term of office, and the fact that he won the Nobel Peace Prize for 2001 together with the United Nations, attest clearly to the great confidence that the entire international community places in him.

There cannot be economic progress nor sustainable development outside an environment of peace, security and stability. Togo's foreign policy has always been based on the principle of seeking peace, stability and solidarity between nations.

Since coming to power, the President of our Republic, Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadema, has worked to consolidate peace. This requires the participation of all citizens in political life as well as the construction of a state that is truly based on the rule of law, in which all individuals can make their contribution and use their skills in the building of a prosperous nation.

The President had already begun to democratize political life in Togo by the 1980s. Like any other human endeavour, the promotion of democracy and good governance and the consolidation of the rule of law are part of a process that, by necessity, can be perfected and can evolve and that fits in a given time and place.

With various forms of support and aid from our foreign partners, this process is taking its course and registering tangible and real progress. We should like here to express our profound thanks to all our international partners who have supported us in our ambition to pursue and achieve political reforms necessary to consolidate democracy and rule of law in Togo.

The upcoming legislative elections, in March 2002, are organized with the aim of making this ambition more of a reality. In this regard, we are grateful to the United Nations for having recently sent an assessment mission to Togo to make recommendations in light of these elections. The long-awaited upcoming legislative elections, as well as the proper conduct of the balloting, will, without a doubt, contribute to boosting the economy of our country.

For it is true that progress made in pursuing any process of democratization and establishing the rule of law can be protected only if accompanied by a significant improvement in the living conditions of the populations concerned. In other words, to be lasting, the advances in promoting civil and political rights and fundamental liberties should absolutely be underpinned by the real enjoyment of economic and social rights.

In such a context, we may well be surprised at the unjustified continuation of the economic sanctions imposed on Togo by our main partners in development for almost 10 years. What has my country done to deserve such a fate? What has the Togolese population done to justify its daily suffering? Why apply this policy of double standards? Given the way Togo is being treated, are we to see this as an concrete illustration of the views of the renowned, classic French writer Jean de la Fontaine: "Depending on whether you are powerful or weak, the judgement of the court will make you white or black"?

The Togolese people still cannot understand why Togo — which was one of the first countries in Africa to be committed to the path of democratization and political reforms and which, in all objectivity, made progress in this area — continues to be subjected to such injustice. I would like to make once again an urgent appeal, on behalf of the Togolese Government

and people, for normalization of our cooperative relations with our development partners.

Peace, security and stability in Africa are still at the heart of our concerns. We note with satisfaction that significant progress in settling conflicts has recently been made on the continent. I would cite by way of example the cessation of conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, or the gradual return to normal constitutional life in Comores, despite the vicissitudes of the last few days. All this was made possible thanks to the efforts of the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of la Francophonie and the League of Arab States. These are glimmers of hope and signs of relief.

Nonetheless, must remains to be done to bring about lasting peace and security in certain parts of the continent, notably in the Mano River region, the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes Region and Angola.

The serious crisis endures in the Middle East. Violence can only beget bitterness and resentment and perpetuate violence. The hellish cycle of violence that the region has known for already more than a year — in particular, in the occupied Palestinian territories — has certainly had an impact on the negotiations being pursued with a view to reaching a just, final and comprehensive settlement to the question of Palestine that is at the heart of the conflict.

It is therefore important that the parties in conflict show greater proof of the necessary political will in applying the agreements that have been reached and work to conclude other arrangements on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions. In this respect, Togo welcomes the positive developments that have been recently made with respect to the evolution of the position of certain Member States on the creation of a Palestinian State.

Humanity has fully entered the twenty-first century, but the economic and social position of developing countries remains of concern. In sub-Saharan Africa and in the least-developed countries in particular, we are witnessing an ongoing deterioration of living conditions and the unprecedented marginalization of these countries — a situation that can only exacerbate misery and extreme poverty.

Debt burden, the decline in export earnings and the lack of sufficient resources for development have greatly contributed to making social and economic conditions worse. Therefore more resources must be allocated to these areas. In addition to these insurmountable difficulties, we now have the pandemics of AIDS and malaria.

Africa, which is already organizing itself and taking matters in hand, expects the international community to make good on the commitments undertaken at the Millennium Summit. Against this background, we hope that the major encounters that will take place in 2002 — the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development — will be opportunities to take appropriate measures that can genuinely contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction. We also hope that specific and substantial support will be given to Africa in implementing its development plan, as contained in the New Partnership for Development in Africa.

At the start of the millennium, with great changes underway in the world, the United Nations still is, without a doubt, the centre for new hopes and expectations of humanity. More than ever before, it has shown itself to be the appropriate framework in which, together, we can and must work to meet the numerous and complex challenges that humanity faces in the context of an increasingly inexorable process of globalization.

While continuing to work to maintain peace and security, promote sustainable economic development and move towards eradicating the great pandemics, we also must confront poverty, injustice, selfishness and exclusion, which, it seems to me, still are the source of many problems that often lead to acts of violence, terrorism and armed conflict. Thus, and only thus, will it be possible for us to establish a new international order of greater justice, solidarity and humanity.

Mr. Gatti (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino, I wish to congratulate Mr. Han Seung-soo on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session and to thank his predecessor for his valuable contribution.

I would also like to congratulate the Secretary-General, who was recently re-elected for a second term. Over the past five years, my country has greatly appreciated his efficiency, charisma and excellent diplomatic ability.

In expressing its most sincere satisfaction, the Republic of San Marino congratulates the United Nations and its Secretary-General on having been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of this Organization's ongoing commitment to peace and irreplaceable role and of its leader's outstanding diplomatic skills and dedication, which have always characterized his fruitful activity.

Quite understandably, these days the General Assembly is debating and wondering how and why the world could change in just a few hours and how the process of civilization of the international community could be so ferociously attacked. We have gathered in the most important international forum to define the role to be played by each country, individually or multilaterally, and to determine how this daunting and insidious challenge can be faced by each and everyone of us. Our discussions should also focus on how to adjust our national legal systems to better support a resolute fight against any form of international terrorism, strengthen our defence systems and promote a common culture of solidarity and firm condemnation of any violation of and attack on human rights and civil co-existence, the respect and safeguard of which are crucial.

However, at a time of enormous difficulties, when the wave of hatred and violence seems to be inexorable, the international community is sending a strong signal of hope by showing its determination not to bend to people who, acting underground, try to spread terror and turmoil by any possible means. Large and small countries alike have joined forces to combat terrorism and have expressed their full solidarity with the United States' outstanding example of democracy and liberty. To the United States and the families of the victims, I wish to express my deepest sympathies and condolences.

Almost all countries have seen the attack on the United States as an attack on each of them. That explains why, in the face of such tragedies, many small nations, too, such as the Republic I represent today, cannot remain neutral by simply offering solidarity or making statements of principles. Each and every one of us is called upon to offer a determined and timely contribution, however small, to the fight against terrorism, which my country has always condemned in all international forums as the main threat to peace.

In this spirit, San Marino immediately expressed its willingness to collaborate with the United States of America and to fully comply with Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 1333 (2000) of 19 December 2000 and 1373 (2001) of 28 September 2001. This decision was motivated not only by the fact that our Republic has been a Member of this Organization for almost a decade, but above all by its inherent vocation to promote peace and respect for human rights, prompted by the conviction, matured over 1,700 years of peace and liberty, that any effort in this direction helps to create and maintain international co-existence and mutual respect.

The Republic of San Marino will spare no effort in the global fight against terrorism, as it has already done to prevent and combat money-laundering. To that end, it has adopted the necessary legislative instruments and effective domestic measures and has actively participated in the action carried out in this field by major international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

My country has successfully integrated many international provisions aimed at countering terrorism and intends to proceed to the ratification, as soon as possible, of those instruments that are not yet part of its legal system. Indeed, San Marino is well aware of the importance and effectiveness of international law, which has been expressly designed to promote cooperation in this field. In this context, the proposal submitted by India on a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention should be taken into consideration as, today more than ever, this is a very topical issue that deserves our greatest attention.

At the beginning of this new century, mankind cannot and must not move backwards. That would be extremely dangerous, as it would challenge the state of civilization that mankind has worked so strenuously to achieve. All free spirits must do their utmost to avert this potential defeat and embark on the path of solidarity, cooperation and mutual understanding.

I would also like to convey the hope expressed by the Government of San Marino and major institutional bodies for intensified activity by the United Nations, in the conviction that a more active role of the Organization is needed to face the numerous international challenges that, aside from today's

exceptional circumstances, are still at the top of the world political agenda.

On this occasion, I feel duty-bound to congratulate the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly for having implemented, with great determination and courage, a major programme of reforms aimed at strengthening the United Nations, well aware of the fact that only a continuous modernization process will enable the Organization to work effectively and to keep abreast of future developments.

In this regard, San Marino has repeatedly stressed the need for a reformed Security Council that, in better reflecting the new world order, would guarantee a higher degree of representativeness, democracy and transparency. We believe that such prerogatives can be ensured by simply increasing the number of non-permanent members. Moreover, San Marino hopes that the right of veto may be gradually restricted with a view to its eventual elimination. Indeed, my country is convinced that the exercise of that right, or the mere threat of its exercise, still represents a major obstacle to the proper functioning of the Organization.

Equally important is the ongoing revitalization process of the General Assembly. The progress that has been achieved in terms of greater efficiency makes us believe that the General Assembly will regain its status as the major decision-making and representative body of the United Nations. My country hopes that the Ad Hoc Working Group, open to all Member States, will carry on this revitalization process.

In consideration of the pivotal role of the United Nations in fostering international peace and security, the Republic of San Marino is of the opinion that this Organization is the most appropriate negotiating forum at the disposal of the community of nations. Besides carefully following the Security Council's efforts to address the latest events, my country has paid great attention to the Council's ongoing commitment to settling the conflicts afflicting Africa. Today more than ever, we believe that the immediate implementation of that body's decisions is crucial to restoring peace in a geographical area already stricken by poverty, epidemics and underdevelopment.

San Marino is also seriously concerned about the escalation of violence and the increased hostilities in the Middle East and hopes that, in that tormented and contested land, dialogue and negotiations can be resumed as the sine qua non of a longed-for world reconciliation.

Against today's international backdrop, the phenomenon of globalization also deserves careful consideration. I am not referring exclusively to its economic and commercial implications, though these are its most tangible components.

Market expansion and the progressive abolition of customs barriers have unquestionably contributed to exporting job opportunities and, eventually, to economic well-being. On the other hand, however, the gap between the living conditions and standards of the North and the South, of the industrialized countries vis-à-vis the developing and least developed ones, which are also burdened by huge foreign debt, has widened dramatically. That gap must be immediately bridged in order to guarantee the globalization of opportunities along with the globalization of markets.

We have all witnessed the anti-globalization demonstrations in Seattle, Prague and, more recently, Genoa. Paradoxically, both the participants in the summits and the demonstrators were striving for the same objectives: poverty eradication, foreign debt relief for developing countries and greater environmental protection. I believe that the existence of common objectives is a first step in the direction of an open and constructive exchange of views.

The Republic of San Marino also maintains that poverty alleviation is one of the major challenges facing the international community for the immediate future. Future projects should address not only the lack of access to consumer goods, but also the lack of education, liberty and participation in decision-making. In this broader context, poverty is an insurmountable obstacle to the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Recently published data dramatically show that more than 1.5 billion people live on less than $2 per day, and at least two thirds are illiterate; 830 million people suffer from severe malnutrition, and 750 million are homeless, without access to health care. Moreover, how can we ignore the fact that hundreds of millions of children are suffering from malnutrition, that 30,000 children under five years of age are dying every day and that more than 500 million of them live on less than $1 per day?

Well aware of the dramatic situation of many developing countries, the Republic of San Marino has fully supported the initiatives sponsored by creditor countries and international financial institutions to reduce or cancel foreign debts of highly indebted nations. Though not sufficient to mitigate the problem of poverty or to stop the vicious cycle of misery, these initiatives reflect the will of both creditor and debtor countries to find jointly a solution for the scourge of poverty and to share responsibilities.

It is not utopian to think that, by addressing and solving the problems of hunger, poverty and the disproportionate social, economic and cultural gaps between a minority living in the North and an overwhelming, poor and despairing majority living in the South, terrorism will also be wiped out in the near future. Indeed, poverty and ideological extremism serve as fertile soil for terrorism, with its destructive potential and toll in human lives.

Once again, the Holy Father has rightly called on all States and peoples to struggle for justice, since this is the only way to affirm the pre-eminence of law for the international community. Throughout its long and glorious history of freedom, San Marino has always fully shared this ideal.

Prompted by these sentiments and determined to further support progressive international détente, for the benefit of both nations and individuals, I reiterate the hope of the Republic of San Marino that the international community, through the recognized ability of the United Nations system, will be able to give new impetus to the principles of dialogue and cooperation upon which it is based.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Win Aung, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar.

Mr. Aung (Myanmar): On behalf of the delegation of the Union of Myanmar, I wish to extend our warmest congratulations to Mr. Han Seung-soo on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. His election to this high office reflects the trust and confidence of all the Member States in his diplomatic skills and leadership qualities and in his ability to guide our deliberations to successful conclusions. It is also a tribute to his country, the Republic of Korea, which is at the forefront in our common efforts to achieve the goals of the Organization. In the discharge of his heavy responsibilities, may I assure him of our full support and cooperation.

I also wish to express our deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, for his able leadership and valuable contribution during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

May I also take this opportunity to congratulate our Secretary-General on his re-election to lead the Organization for a second term. I also wish to pay tribute to him for his tireless efforts and far-sighted initiatives to strengthen the United Nations. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to our Secretary-General and to the Organization is well-deserved recognition in this regard.

The international community was greatly shocked by the recent horrendous terrorist attacks in the United States of America. We are profoundly saddened by the enormous loss of lives and property. We join the international community in extending our deep condolences to the people of the United States in general and the bereaved families in particular. Wherever and by whomever committed, terrorism in any form or under any circumstances is unjustifiable. As a nation that has had bitter experiences with terrorism, both on its own soil and against its aircraft and diplomatic service abroad, Myanmar is against terrorism in all forms and manifestations.

The challenges of combating terrorism are both difficult and complex. Therefore, it is essential that the international community come together under the aegis of the United Nations to overcome the enormous challenge.

In this regard, I commend the Secretary-General for organizing a treaty event at United Nations Headquarters from 10 to 16 November 2001. Myanmar is already a party to 4 of the 12 conventions on terrorism, and on 12 November we signed the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and acceded to the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings.

In the aftermath of the economic crisis of 1997, Asian countries are still striving to return to a path of sustained growth. However, the current slowdown in the major economies of the world is threatening to negate whatever progress they have made. As these economies continue with structural reforms to sustain their economic recovery, they are confronted with an

international economic and trading environment that is not very encouraging.

This situation is creating difficulties, especially for many developing countries and economies in transition. Commodity prices are declining due to weakening world demand. External financing conditions are also worsening. Factors such as indebtedness, declining official development assistance and low levels of domestic and foreign investment continue to undermine the programmes of the most vulnerable States. It is against this unfavourable backdrop that Myanmar is striving to achieve economic development of the country.

There are also hindrances to our efforts to promote the well-being of our people, such as denial of official development assistance and the application of unilateral and coercive economic measures. However, we are resolute in our efforts to achieve our goals by relying on our domestic resources and internal strength and by putting our comparative advantages to optimum use. Our sustained national efforts for development have resulted in 8.4 per cent average annual growth during the last five-year plan, resulting in a substantial increase in per capita income and in better living standards for the people.

In their respective endeavours to bring about economic development and social progress, the developing countries continue to face formidable challenges. The debt burden, the declining flow of official development assistance, the lack of market access and access to technology, and the decline in foreign direct investment continue to persist. The United Nations must play a central role in helping those countries to help themselves.

In this regard, we recognize the important role of United Nations funds and programmes in international cooperation for development. However, their important role should not be undermined by practices that are not in conformity with the principles underpinning the operation of those funds and programmes. Moreover, they should not be used as a platform for exerting pressure on a country that needs and deserves international cooperation in its development efforts.

While acknowledging the role of various funds and programmes, we are particularly appreciative of the important role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In United Nations operational activities for development, UNDP serves as the principal instrument for capacity-building in developing countries. Myanmar regrets, however, that the United Nations Development Programme is not allowed to have a country programme for Myanmar. While UNDP continues its useful activities in Myanmar, it is, however, prohibited from promoting capacity-building for reasons other than those for which UNDP was created.

In the present context of an extremely difficult economic and trading environment, the denial of the right of development to a country in need of international cooperation is a matter that deserves appropriate redress.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic poses a serious challenge to the international community. The response of the international community and the efforts being made at the national, regional and international levels to counter this global threat are very encouraging. However, the real challenge for us is the high level of resources needed to combat this disease effectively. It is therefore most welcome that a global AIDS and health fund has been established. With the determination and will that has been demonstrated in current efforts, and strengthened with adequate resources, we are convinced that we will eventually win this war on HIV/AIDS. Myanmar fully recognizes the nature and gravity of the HIV/AIDS problem, is taking the necessary actions at the national level and is enhancing our cooperation at the regional and international levels.

Let me take this opportunity to apprise the Assembly of the political situation in our country. As the Assembly is aware, Myanmar is in the process of establishing a multiparty democracy with a sound economy. All of the measures that we have taken are directed towards that end in a focused manner. This is the course of action which we will pursue steadfastly to its logical end - that is, until democracy is firmly established. We have learned from bitter experience, as well as from the lessons of other countries with similar experiences, and we are taking great care to ensure that the transition to a new system is peaceful, smooth and effective and that the foundations we are striving to lay are placed on firm ground.

We have also been taking effective measures for national reconciliation. We have reached arrangements with 17 out of 18 armed groups, who are now joining hands with the Government in national development

endeavours. In the same vein, we are also making national reconciliation efforts with the political parties. Here, let me stress what the Secretary-General has so rightly outlined in his report. Our national reconciliation efforts are home-grown, and our goal of building a peaceful and democratic society can be successfully achieved only by the people of Myanmar.

Myanmar continues to make relentless efforts to combat the scourge of narcotic drugs. We have made considerable headway in the suppression of opium and heroin. The latest figures show that opium production has declined by 38 per cent. To achieve this, we tackled the problem in a holistic manner. We have strengthened our legislation; we have enhanced our enforcement capacity; and we have combined these measures with a development programme to find alternative livelihoods for people in remote areas, so that they do not have to resort to growing opium.

While we are taking effective measures against the cultivation, production and trafficking of the opium poppy, we are also taking action against the danger of amphetamine-type stimulants, which are relatively new but equally dangerous narcotic drugs. Due to their availability and affordable price, the widespread use of these stimulants among young people has led to an alarming situation in our subregion. This situation calls for renewed efforts at the national level and for stepped-up cooperation at the subregional level.

To enhance cooperation at the regional level, ministers from Myanmar, China, Thailand and Laos met in Beijing in August and agreed to cooperate closely to fight the problem. Our efforts have achieved tangible results: the seizure of drugs and the arrest of the traffickers involved.

Myanmar fully understands how important and urgent it is to combat this scourge afflicting mankind. We have made a firm commitment at the highest political level and are determined to translate these commitments into practical and effective measures within the set time-frame.

I wish to inform the Assembly that we have also enhanced our cooperation with the United Nations system. We continue our cooperation with Mr. Razali Ismail, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, who completed his fifth visit to the country in August. Another visit towards the end of this year has also been agreed to. Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, visited the country twice earlier this year.

Determined to resolve the issue of forced labour, Myanmar is fully cooperating with the International Labour Organization (ILO). In September 2001, an ILO high-level team paid a three-week visit to Myanmar to objectively assess the practical implementation and actual impact of the legislative, executive and administrative measures adopted by the Government to eliminate the practice of forced labour. The Government extended its full cooperation to the team in arranging its meetings in Myanmar and its fact-finding trips to various parts of the country identified by it. What was most important, we gave the team unfettered freedom and unlimited access to carry out its mandate successfully.

Let me now make a few observations concerning the work of the Organization. Last year, our heads of State and Government and leaders gathered in the General Assembly Hall and charted a road-map to guide our future actions. All our work and energy must be directed towards effectively using that road-map to achieve a peaceful and developed world. Peace and the development of nations are the twin objectives of our Organization. While globalization has, to a considerable degree, reduced our planet to the village level, the issues we face in achieving peace and development are global in scale and complexity. As we are acutely aware, no one country is capable of resolving those issues on its own. It is only through concerted efforts and genuine partnerships that we will be able to address those issues of a global scale.

We believe that as the only universal forum with the most comprehensive mandate, the United Nations must play a central role and coordinate our actions in those efforts. At the same time, the United Nations must be further strengthened and vitalized to be able to carry out its global mission effectively and expeditiously. That will require the further strengthening of its organs and institutions. For our part, we must provide the Organization with the resources and the level of support needed to implement its mandate. It is also vitally important to give real effect to our pledges through concrete actions if our Organization is to be successful in building a world of peace and development.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kolawolé A. Idji,

Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of the Republic of Benin.

Mr. Idji (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I would first of all like to express my outrage at the unacceptable conditions that terrorism has imposed on us at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly of our Organization. New York has traditionally been a welcoming and cosmopolitan city. But now, during the Assembly's fifty-sixth session, it and our Organization have been forced to take on the appearance of a besieged fortress.

No one knows what the terrorists have planned, nor who their next victims will be. We are all on the same side in the face of their diabolical enterprise — on the side of this battered city; on the side of the American people and their Government; and on the side of all the innocent victims brought down so cruelly and coldly in Pennsylvania, Washington and New York on that tragic day of 11 September 2001. We reiterate our profound condolences and sympathy to all the bereaved families and to their countries and Governments. At the same time, we reaffirm our unreserved condemnation of terrorism. Terrorism violates the principles of all religions. It blemishes all the causes on whose behalf it claims to act, even the most just among them. It is for that reason that it must be combated by all of us without reservation.

The worldwide awakening aroused by the tragic events of 11 September 2001 must cause us all — great and small, rich or poor — to join in an extraordinary effort to fight those who have decided to sacrifice us without having ever consulted us about either their objectives or war tactics. But it should also be said that as wholly repugnant as terrorist practices are, they cannot be eradicated definitively unless the fertile soil that feeds the situations that serve as their pretexts is removed. The strict respect for human rights and the rights of peoples that are so rightly enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations should today guide our political practices more than ever before. It is urgent for the United Nations to take its proper place in international relations and for it to play the role incumbent upon it. In that regard, the reform of the Security Council is an urgent and imperative necessity.

Poverty, injustice, exclusion and marginalization always result in creating total despair, thereby causing extremism to flourish. And we know how easily extremists sacrifice their own lives and those of others. It is the duty of all of us, and particularly of the most powerful among us, to provide the necessary support to eradicate poverty, marginalization, exclusion and injustice, and to bear that in mind at all times in the just, legitimate and resolute struggle against all forms of terrorism.

The current tragic events that I have just recalled heighten our concerns and give greater weight to the responsibilities of the President of the General Assembly. But his personal talents and experience in world affairs bolster our conviction that he will successfully steer the ship of our Organization into port in these particularly difficult circumstances. For some years now, his country and mine have enjoyed friendly and fruitful relations. He can count on the cooperation and support of the delegation of Benin in the execution of his noble mission.

I would also like to pay well-deserved tribute to Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, who guided the United Nations into the new millennium with great spirit. He presided over the Millennium Assembly with competence and discipline, and we extend to him our congratulations and gratitude.

My congratulations go also to my brother, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his well-deserved re-election to the post of Secretary-General of the United Nations and on the Nobel Peace Prize for 2001, awarded to him and the Organization he leads with such competence and dedication. The United Nations has gained a great deal of credibility thanks in particular to the efforts of Mr. Kofi Annan and his team in the Secretariat. Never has there been a more well-deserved prize, and we take pride in it. Indeed, it is all of Africa that is honoured. On behalf of the Benin delegation and myself, I would like to repeat our warm congratulations and encouragement.

Let me take this opportunity to address the international community and each Member of the Assembly to convey the thanks of my country for their massive participation at the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Cotonou from 4 to 6 December 2000. Indeed, the Cotonou Conference saw record attendance, with 106 States, 20 international organizations and 51 non-governmental organizations represented, not to mention academics and other researchers interested in discovering Benin's experience of democracy. Benin was honoured by the effective participation of three

heads of State. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme made a point of attending personally in Cotonou. We welcome this gracious and generous gesture on their part, and express our gratitude to all bilateral and multilateral partners, those from the new or restored democracies as well as those from the older democracies who contributed to financing this Conference.

To judge by its title, "Peace, Security, Democracy and Development", the Cotonou Conference was an important stage in the progress of our century towards a consolidation and expansion of democracy. It marked a remarkable advance by its future-oriented approach and the importance of the document that crowned its work, entitled "Cotonou Declaration". This Declaration lays out brave and bold measures designed to build democracy and allow to it survive in peace, security and respect for diverse cultures. There can be no democracy unless it is adapted to the soil in which it is planted, even if the values of democracy are universal.

The Cotonou Conference was also an opportunity to appreciate how genuine the march towards democracy in Africa is. All peoples want liberty, but the institutional and financial capacity to establish it is weak in many cases, particularly in developing countries. That is why my country hopes for more substantial assistance for the strengthening of the institutional capacities of our countries, because democracy can function only if the leaders and their peoples feel they are equal stakeholders. It is also essential that within the United Nations system, the structure recommended by the Cotonou Conference, while following up the International Conference for New or Restored Democracies, be established with a view to increasing coordination among the different initiatives and activities undertaken or contemplated by the agencies, programmes and various institutions of the United Nations system.

Indeed, the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies strove to highlight the link that exists between democracy and development. The Conference clearly indicated that if democracy is a force for stability, poverty is a major factor for destabilization and a source of conflicts and war. The decisions of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies should not be allowed to remain dead letters. We must organize cooperation and solidarity among all the democracies of the world.

In the course of the Millennium Summit, which took place in this very Hall from 6 to 8 September 2000, major decisions were taken. Among them, pride of place belonged to those relating to questions of development, the elimination of poverty and the particular needs of the least advanced countries. The Millennium Declaration provides, in paragraph 15 of chapter III:

> "We also undertake to address the special needs of the least developed countries. In this context, we welcome the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries to be held in May 2001 and will endeavour to ensure its success." (*resolution 55/2, para. 15*)

That Conference was held in Brussels from 14 to 20 May 2001 and produced a Programme of Action that was the fruit of very arduous negotiation. However, questions remain. Will the poor countries someday know prosperity? Will they someday be able to satisfy their basic needs? How will they finance their development? Public development assistance is in decline. Investment in poor countries remains weak, and the burden of debt is becoming heavier. What is to be done?

With regard to the question of debt, we think particularly bold solutions are required. For the creditor countries, it must be recognized these solutions are neither simple nor easy. Some of these countries have already adopted exemplary and bold measures; others must follow suit. At stake are their own interests: at stake is the interest of world peace.

This demand represents to us the symbol of solidarity and shared responsibility. That is why the Benin delegation recommends the urgent establishment of an effective and highly visible follow-up mechanism of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

In the context of the search for peace and the promotion of international cooperation, many disarmament organizations and other related bodies were created to reaffirm that questions of peace and security and questions of development were interdependent and inseparable. The creation of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic meets this need. Its goal is to protect the coastal States of the southern part of the Atlantic Ocean from the dangers of nuclear weapons and to create there a zone

of peace and strengthening of cooperation for development.

Since the third ministerial meeting, held in Brasilia, my country had offered to host the sixth meeting, scheduled for the year 2000, but because of the organization of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, this meeting could not take place. My country is looking forward to the early meeting of this sixth meeting. That is why I would like to announce here Benin's offer to organize the sixth ministerial meeting of the States of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic in the second half of 2003.

A particularly important instrument of South-South cooperation, the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic should lay the foundations in Cotonou for its effective and regular functioning within the new context of international relations. All of you here are welcome to Benin, a marketplace and meeting place, a land of democracy and peace.

It is more urgent than ever to establish such peace in the Middle East by recognizing as a matter of urgency on the part of us all the imperative necessity of the Palestinian State — side by side, of course, with the State of Israel — in peace with all its neighbours within secure and recognized frontiers. This is the same peace that Angola and all Africa long for.

Mr. Gounaris (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We must ban all forms of the illicit traffic in petroleum, diamonds and weapons. These types of illegal traffic cause and sustain wars, and the traffickers are genuine terrorists.

From 31 August to 8 September 2001, the Republic of South Africa hosted in Durban the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. That great international forum, held under the auspices of the United Nations, brought to light the desire for rehabilitation, justice and fulfilment of the obligations of memory and acknowledgement, which humanity's recent history has left in the subconscious of certain peoples. The difficult debates on the thorny questions raised during the Conference reflect the extent of the difficulties in this undertaking that we all fervently called for.

A collective spirit of openness, the impressive abilities of the host country, the Republic of South Africa, and particularly the receptiveness and ability of my sister, Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, enabled us to reach agreement on two encouraging documents: the final Programme of Action and the final Declaration. In our view, these documents represent the international community's renewed commitment to fighting and eradicating the seeds of racism and racial discrimination. The foundation has been laid. Now, action must follow to make the two Durban documents a reality of everyday life. This does not mean reopening old wounds; rather, we must all now attend to healing the wounds of the past.

The tragic events whose effects we are still living through obliged us to postpone the General Assembly's special session in follow-up to the World Summit for Children. My country hopes that a new date can be decided on during this session so that we can assess the situation of children in the world 10 years after the World Summit, because much remains to be done to improve the lot of children.

Allow me to recall that Benin, having ratified on 3 August 1990 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is among the first 22 States of the world consenting to be legally bound by this instrument. Benin has also ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Articles 12, 13 and 26 of Benin's Constitution guarantee the right to education and the protection of families, mothers and children. Benin's intentions in this area are also apparent in the creation of a Ministry of the Family, Social Protection and Solidarity, which will be devoted essentially to the implementation of a cohesive and aggressive policy to protect the family, particularly children.

Encouraging results have been achieved at the national level, but much remains to be done. We are doing admirable work in this area in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and several estimable non-governmental organizations, such as Terre des Hommes, and several other partners of good will. Those who know Benin can testify to this.

These collaborative efforts have not stopped certain misinformed or ill-intentioned circles in search of scandals from using the Etireno affair to deceive people into believing that the enslavement and selling

of children take place in Benin. But neither malicious intentions nor misinformation nor this sort of intellectual terrorism will prevent us from making progress in terms of democracy, the protection of women and the protection of children from the abuse they still suffer in all the countries of the world, particularly in poor, underdeveloped countries.

The Millennium Declaration gave special attention to Africa under the heading "Meeting the special needs of Africa". One year later, the countries of Africa are still waiting for action to begin to be taken on those promises. However, Africans are no longer willing to wait and have taken their fate into their own hands by creating the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The partnership is a consequence of the newly restored confidence of Africans in their own abilities. It is aimed at placing the historic initiative in the hands of Africans themselves, without in any way renouncing international cooperation. An important step has thus been taken with this new African joint initiative.

Africans finally have hope that their continent will cease to be the continent of disease, poverty, misery and bloody conflicts and that a real partnership can be created between us and the rest of the world. It is our wish that this hope will become reality.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Timothy Harris, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Education of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Harris (Saint Kitts and Nevis): It gives me great pleasure to convey to Mr. Han Seung-soo heartfelt congratulations, on behalf of my delegation and the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis, on his accession to the honourable post of President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to congratulate his predecessor on a job well done, especially during such an exhausting period for the United Nations. The success of the United Nations is built on the hard work of its Members, and both the President and his predecessor have shown dedication to the positive functioning of this esteemed institution.

In the last decade, world leaders have been working tirelessly in different forums to redefine and address the myriad challenges that characterize the so-called new order. This has placed a great premium on the United Nations, which has provided an able platform for exchanges of ideas, practical dialogue and conflict resolution. My delegation is satisfied that marked progress has been made in identifying many of the critical issues. The United Nations deserves high praise, and we commend Member States for their willingness to use the diplomatic and political resources of the Organization in the conduct of their international relations.

The involvement of the United Nations in recent times is a fitting backdrop for the decision that the coming year will be designated the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. This is most timely, and it serves as a revalidation of our belief that dialogue is a critical ingredient in promoting partnership and improved understanding among Governments and peoples.

Dialogue is the foundation of solid democracies, strong people-centred institutions, civil societies and sustainable human development. Dialogue is still that very important catalyst which often staves off war and conflict, enabling consensus and confidence-building in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Thus, it is quite obvious why the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis supports this idea.

In a certain sense, a new world order dawned on 11 September 2001, when terrorism, in a most outrageous form, reared its ugly head in the cities of Washington and New York, in the United States of America, with the loss of thousands of innocent lives. Dialogue among members of the international community rapidly spawned an anti-terrorism coalition of countries, thereby defining the protagonists in this unfolding new order. My country stands solidly with this coalition, especially in pursuing the generally agreed strategies to contain terrorism. Despite the horrendous act of 11 September and subsequent bioterrorism, life goes on, adjusted to a new reality.

Another opportunity where dialogue may prove useful in advancing human security will come when Governments meet at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico next year. Saint Kitts and Nevis regards this as an important occasion to promote the interests of all nations. But, we are especially hopeful that this Conference will embrace the aspirations and promote better appreciation for the needs, vulnerabilities and special circumstances of small economies in small island developing States.

My Prime Minister has repeatedly urged the international community to take a more unbiased look at the peculiar situation of small, vulnerable economies. This is not an appeal for international charity, but a signal to promote the kind of realism through which a Marshall Plan of commitment can be devised to energize small, vulnerable economies so that they can effectively participate in a globalized economy.

Dialogue is important in building real participatory democracies. But democracy among nations is as crucial as democracy within nations. When the people we serve feel that our actions as leaders do not reflect their dreams, goals and aspirations, they may use their democratic right to effect change. We have a duty, therefore, to give loud voices to their silent legitimate hopes. We must place added value on the hopes and expectations of our people in order to legitimize the concepts of representative democracy.

It is within this context that I urge this body to redouble its efforts in finding a solution to the unfortunate stalemate that beleaguers relations between the Chinese people across the Taiwan Straits. My Government remains convinced that both sides of the Taiwan Straits should become fully engaged in this peaceful and non-coercive process without the distraction of preconditions. It would lead to the successful resolution of what appears to be a very contentious issue. At the same time, we encourage the United Nations to be vigilant and ready to assist where possible or when required. Prior to the peaceful settlement of their dispute, it is imperative that we establish a mechanism by which the international community can benefit more appropriately from the proven expertise, technical know-how and skills of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

We call on the United Nations to assist in the resolution of the question of full inclusion of Cuba into the affairs of the western hemisphere. Also, we urge the people of Cuba, as we celebrate the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, to embrace the challenge of ensuring that they can participate fully in the community of nations.

Participatory democracy among nations must be erected on the twin pillars of mutual respect and trust. But trust wanes in the face of unilateral actions such as threats made by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries to blacklist and impose sanctions on sovereign Caribbean Governments, consequent upon the OECD countries' misunderstanding of fiscal initiatives taken by sovereign Caribbean Governments as a way to underpin sustainable economic development.

As we celebrate the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, we urge Member States to resist the lure of national paternalism and unilateral action as a means of problem-solving. In a matter so crucial to the economic future of Caribbean countries, it is inconceivable that conclusions could have been reached and decisions arrived at without the courtesy of dialogue with the very countries against whom such scathing indictments had been made. However, most recently, wiser counsel has prevailed and, in a spirit of dialogue and partnership, significant progress has been made by means of a compromise agreement. The Caribbean Community hails this agreement on offshore fiscal initiatives as a step in the right direction. Such is the power of dialogue among civilizations.

We imagine that the mechanisms of globalization, if timely and equitably applied, can be productive, inclusive, and improve lives. It must be emphasized that, although small States may justifiably harbour some apprehension about globalization, we do not oppose it. On the contrary, we welcome the opportunities to empower our citizens so that they may compete successfully in a global marketplace, mindful that empowerment and the ability to compete successfully, however, require appropriate skill-sets, academic resources and material tools. In order for small States to benefit fully from the new economic order, the global agenda must become a humane agenda, sufficiently responsive to facilitate equitable and affordable access to modern technology — that is to say, technology that is appropriate and responsive to the basic needs of poor communities and small States.

Without realism and a holistic approach in examining the social and economic conditions within small States, there is a potential for serious dislocation when these States attempt to operate within the global marketplace. As responsible Member States, we have a genuine obligation to work towards improving the lives of the disenfranchised. This, I am sure, is the main reason we are here today. Therefore, we must continue to right this important chapter in the development of human security. We must also remain cognizant that, as members of the global village, we have to discard old

suspicions and embrace new partnerships, dialogue and diversity as necessary components of our interdependence.

Partnership and understanding will prove essential in our efforts to tackle common problems such as drug trafficking and the pandemic of HIV/AIDS. The special session on HIV/AIDS came at an important juncture, and we urge Member States to support the decisions that were taken. In small States, like Saint Kitts and Nevis, the pandemic of HIV/AIDS presents one of the most devastating challenges to the development of human security, because such a disease threatens to unravel the delicately woven balance of social growth and economic potential.

Our people are at great risk, and the prospect of losing decades of development and talented people to this illness is amazingly real. On top of losing their young and most productive people, Governments are expected in turn to reallocate significant amounts of already meagre resources from critical development programs to provide costly care and treatment. We salute the United States Government, the World Bank, and others for their recent and important initiatives to help fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the Caribbean and we urge others to adopt similar initiatives.

We see what an important role dialogue is playing in the hemispheric approach at the Organization of American States (OAS) through the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism. This allows member Governments to collaborate in the fight against drug trafficking, in supply and demand initiatives and in the implementation of national or shared strategies. We believe this approach is useful, because it makes common approaches more frequent, discourages unilateral actions and allows member States to share experiences on interdiction, the epidemiology of drug abuse and other trends. The fight against drug trafficking, you will agree, is a transnational one. We cannot point fingers or apportion blame. We need to take action.

Saint Kitts and Nevis welcomes the approach of the OAS, which permits us in the Caribbean to work in a multilateral framework to find common solutions. Equally, such a mechanism focuses attention on the root problems and encourages hemispheric partnership. We hope that these kinds of approaches will become integral components of problem solving at the United Nations.

In closing, the past year was particularly eventful. We began with the Millennium Summit and concluded with the HIV/AIDS special session. In between, we interacted on many contentious issues. It is my hope that during the new year we can move forward with renewed vigour, building on the hard work that our predecessors left in our charge, and paving the way for a brighter future for those to whom we will pass the baton. Once again, we salute the President on behalf of the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Monie Captan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Liberia.

Mr. Captan (Liberia): I am honoured to participate in this historic session on behalf of His Excellency Dr. Charles Ghankay Taylor, President of the Republic of Liberia, and to share with the Assembly his contribution to this debate.

I am pleased to congratulate the President on his on your election as President of the fifty-sixth General Assembly. We wish to assure His Excellency of the full cooperation of the Liberian delegation.

May I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the outgoing President, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, for the very able manner in which he conducted the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

By the same token, I would like to congratulate our distinguished Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his re-election as Secretary-General and for the distinguished recognition he received in being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which, without a doubt, is a result of his vision, commitment and the efficient manner in which he has led and continues to lead our organization.

On 11 September 2001, not very far from this place, which is dedicated to the maintenance of international peace and security, the world was confronted with a kind of terrorism that now renders all of us vulnerable. This terrorism is not confined to any one group of people, nor is it confined to any one geographical location, or to any particular ethnic or religious group. Because of its transnational nature, the world must come together and, in a coordinated and collective manner, construct new models in answer to this scourge. We must act without delay, and without unnecessary debate. We must act with determination and urgency.

The problem of terrorism today requires that our Organization, the United Nations, should take the lead in coordinating and consolidating international efforts to tackle the new challenges that it raises. The United Nations should serve as a catalyst for these efforts, and not another bureaucratic web of inaction and prolonged debate. The United Nations — the institution that humanity has charged with the responsibility for global peace and security — is today the subject of terrorist threats. We must match our words with deeds; we must respond to this scourge.

My Government reiterates its condemnation, in the strongest terms, of the barbaric and heinous acts of terrorism perpetrated against the United States, leading to unimaginable and enormous loss of lives and massive destruction in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. My Government has made concrete offers to the United States Government and the international coalition, and has taken strong measures in keeping with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001).

I wish now to proceed to issue of reform of the United Nations. I believe, like the rest of you, that reform implies change towards a more positive condition. And I presume that when we speak of the United Nations, we speak of nations that have come together with a common interest to achieve a common objective. In essence, when we speak of reform, we must accept that the conditions under which our nations have come together — with a common interest to achieve a common objective — are no longer palatable and require change. The questions that many of us continue to debate regard what changes we want, and how to achieve those changes.

However, I must interject a fundamental question as to whether the conditions, practices and traditions exist for a positive change, assuming we mean positive for the collective good. In bringing about any positive change for the collective good, a level playing field must exist, in which the interest of the whole will freely manifest itself in the change. A level playing field should show the following characteristics: transparency; freedom; fairness; and democratic practices.

In terms of transparency, we must assume a condition in which the operation of and decision-making process within the United Nations and its specialized agencies are open. The Security Council should not deliberate in secrecy, as was the case during the pre-World War II years, in which secret diplomacy and alliance formations characterized the period.

Mr. Papandreou (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In terms of freedom, we must assume that Members of the United Nations can take decisions in the absence of threats, coercion, fear and retribution.

In terms of fairness, we must assume that decisions cannot be taken in contradiction to universal moral imperatives, or to the detriment of the statehood of a Member. Sanctions with adverse socio-economic and humanitarian consequences should not constitute political tools available to a few Members.

In terms of democratic practices, we must assume that decision-making will be reflective of the will of the majority and not of a few; that all Members will have an equal say and equal participation.

Unfortunately, the contrary of these preconditions constitutes the status quo today with regard to the functioning of the United Nations. How can we assume the possibility of reform in the absence of a level playing field?

Reform can be meaningful only in the context of the alteration of the spirit of the Charter. That, as I have suggested, would assume the presence of a level playing field. However, we must all admit that the concept of reform has gained currency only because of an attempt to admit emerging Powers into the elite group of permanent members of the Security Council. Such an attempt has provoked an outcry against the privilege of the few, and the challenge is how to admit these emerging Powers without disrupting the existing allocation of privilege. Privilege is never surrendered. It is shared only when the political structures compel inclusion.

Reform will not occur within the United Nations until structural changes take place in the distribution of power and more non-traditional Powers emerge. It would therefore be an exercise in futility to expect concrete reforms in the United Nations without structural changes. And what we assume to be reform is essentially an adjustment occasioned by structural pressures. This adjustment would be limited to accommodating the newly emerging Powers, while appeasing the less powerful States through participation without power. The conferral of the right

of veto will mark this distinction. A permanent seat will no longer be synonymous with the right of veto.

For the less powerful, the struggle will not be about power, but participation by affiliation, a sort of status club. Prestige is a preoccupation of the national character, which, despite its superficiality, will be pursued by States seeking to distinguish themselves from the crowd. Hence, the focus of the less powerful will be to join the club, and not the pursuit of the more important goal of integration, which is the only answer for the conversion of the less powerful into emerging Powers that would compel adjustment through structural pressures. Debate is not the mechanism of change.

Individual less powerful States can hope to emerge as powerful States only through a process of integration within regional groupings where power in its entire composite is integrated into a common power capability. This would require integration of economic, military, technological, human, political and social resources into an integrated regional capacity. Only when this objective is achieved will the structure of the international political system yield to adjustment.

Africa cannot, with all of its potential, continue to stand by and accept being condemned to perpetually occupy the position of the least developed continent. The African culture, heritage and value systems stand the risk of being lost in the sea of normative ethics based on Western values. Africa should not miss the opportunity of the new African Union to achieve meaningful integration and cooperation within the context of building a powerful African capability that will allow Africans a say in our common world. This will require a new pragmatism, commitment, vision, cooperation and sacrifice on the part of African leaders. The United Nations can work for Africa; we should learn from the successes of the power brokers who have made the United Nations an important instrument of their foreign policy.

Liberia is a small country in West Africa that suffered seven years of civil war from 1990 to 1997. During the years of the civil war most institutions were destroyed, and a major brain drain resulted, as many Liberian professionals travelled abroad to better conditions. The war also resulted in the destruction of basic infrastructure, including power-generating plants, water plants, schools, hospitals, airports, bridges and private property. Over 666,000 Liberians ended up as refugees and over a million as internally displaced persons. More alarming was the failure of the international community to assist in the reintegration of over 60,000 former combatants who remained unemployed and idle.

In 1997 a constitutionally elected Government was inaugurated facing the challenges of restoring a nation that had been destroyed by war. Four years later, the infant Government still faces an unsympathetic international community; it has received no official development assistance, and donor assistance for United Nations agencies and the non-governmental organizations operating in Liberia has declined over the past four years. The current unemployment rate is 85 per cent, while 80 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, the illiteracy rate is estimated at 80 per cent. Half of all school-age children do not attend school. Infant mortality stands at 134 out of 1,000 live births.

Disability prevalence in the population is 16.4 per cent, of which 12.7 per cent is war-related. The World Health Organization rate for a post-war country is between 7 per cent and 10 per cent. The prevailing causes of disabilities are alarming, with 91.5 per cent acquired due to trauma and diseases. About 21 per cent of urban dwellers and 80 per cent of rural dwellers have no access to safe drinking water. Access to adequate sanitation is unavailable to approximately 70 per cent of the population. An estimated 8 per cent of the population is reportedly infected with HIV.

Since 1999, dissidents have waged war in Lofa County against the constitutionally elected Government in Liberia, further exacerbating the already vulnerable humanitarian situation in the country. Death, destruction, displacement of populations and an increase in Liberian refugees have contributed to what the United Nations agencies call a humanitarian crisis in Liberia.

The Liberian Government's capacity to defend its territorial integrity has been impaired by a United Nations arms embargo, despite the right to self-defence, as expressed in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. The Security Council has taken no measures to prevent the ongoing killing of innocent Liberians, especially women and children, who are the targets of atrocities committed in Lofa county by armed dissidents.

This country, a victim of war, poverty and disease, is today also the victim of a regime of punitive sanctions imposed by the Security Council in its resolution 1343 (2001). The representative of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs told the Security Council on 5 November 2001 that the humanitarian situation in Liberia today is "abysmal". (*S/PV.4405, p. 32*) Since the imposition of sanctions by the Security Council, and despite the claim by the Council that the sanctions would not have any adverse effects on ordinary people, socio-economic indicators show that the living conditions of the Liberian people have declined dramatically. Available statistics show a direct correlation between the imposition of sanctions and the decline in the living standards of the Liberian people.

The Security Council has imposed a global travel ban on more than 100 Liberians, without any rationalization. My Government has requested the Security Council to make known its criteria for the inclusion of persons subject to the travel ban. This minimal element of transparency and justice has been denied the Liberian Government. Among those subjected to the travel ban are the sick, invalids, businessmen, wives and ex-wives. What a frightening, alarming and dangerous precedent the Security Council has set. Liberia speaks not for itself, as it has already been victimized, but for the rest of you here, who may find similar treatment meted out against yourselves tomorrow.

Mr. Papandreou (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I await impatiently for a tomorrow when there will be redress from the injustice my country suffers, when all of you here will no longer be obliged to enforce unjust sanctions. Today, I am impatient to hear the General Assembly voice its opposition to the suffering imposed upon Liberian children, women and elderly persons. I impatiently wait for each and every member of the Security Council to respect the human rights of my people. I am impatient for the day when the United Nations will no longer be an instrument that is used to cause the suffering of innocent people. The Government of Liberia calls upon the Security Council to lift all sanctions imposed upon it and to bring to an end the suffering of the Liberian people.

At the twenty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, in 1971, a major decision was taken that to date has had far reaching implications. On 25 October of that year, after two decades of debate, by virtue of General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI) adopted by a vote of 76 in favour, 36 against and 17 abstentions) the Republic of China was expelled from the world body. By that decision, a founding Member and its population — at that time of 14 million people — were effectively prevented from associating with the rest of the world. Nothing in the Charter justified such a decision, yet a precedent was set that is still unsurpassed. Nevertheless, it is the conviction of the Liberian Government that the now 23 million peace-loving people of the Republic of China should be allowed representation and participation in our world body. It is also the hope of the Liberian people that the great Chinese people will one day be peacefully reunited under the principles of democracy and human rights.

In conclusion, permit me to allay the anxieties of all those who are preoccupied with the existing situation between the members of the Mano River Union. The leaders of the three Mano River Union States have resolved to put all of their differences aside and not to return to the destructive process of apportioning blame. We are a single people bound by blood, culture and language. We are bound by a common destiny that links us inextricably to one another and is capable of withstanding ephemeral differences. I wholly agree with President Conté of Guinea when he described our quarrel as a family matter. Our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and mothers and fathers have commenced the process of reconciliation and confidence-building in Freetown, Conakry and Monrovia. So far, a number of significant decisions have been taken at the level of ministers for foreign affairs and the Joint Security Committee. We ask for the Assembly's support in that process.

I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the true fraternal solidarity and support of the Economic Community of West African States, which has stood the test of all of our challenges and difficulties and remains focused on the objective of peace. We too will remain focused on the objective of peace.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency The Honourable Lilian Patel, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Malawi.

Ms. Patel (Malawi): At the outset, I would like to convey the condolences of the people and the Government of the Republic of Malawi to the Government and the people of the United States of America, as well as to the people and Government of the Dominican Republic and other countries whose nationals died in the plane crash that occurred in Queens, here in New York, on 12 November 2001. Similarly, I also wish to convey my condolences to the Government and the people of Algeria, following the recent flood disaster in which many lives were lost and much property was damaged.

On behalf of the Malawi delegation, I feel deeply honoured to join my fellow representatives in congratulating Mr. Han Seung-soo on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly. My delegation looks forward to working closely with him over the coming months in the pursuit of sustainable solutions to the major global concerns and challenges that continue to confront humankind and in the promotion of international peace, security and understanding.

Let me also take this opportunity to express Malawi's deep appreciation of and thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, for his exceptional skills, expertise and unswerving commitment. We have noted with appreciation how his tireless efforts and tenacity have resulted in progress on most of the items of the agenda during his presidency.

May I also take this opportunity to congratulate our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the United Nations as a whole, for being jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the year 2001. This demonstrates the world's recognition of the great strides the Organization and the Secretary-General have made in carrying forward the mandate of the United Nations. This achievement is a rare feat that we should be proud of, and it should serve to encourage all of us to do more for the good of humanity.

I would also like to reiterate the congratulations of the Government of Malawi to Mr. Kofi Annan on his appointment to the post of Secretary-General for a second term of office.

It is appalling and extremely unfortunate that at a time when we thought we were making progress in human development, some people among us conducted heinous and abhorrent acts of terrorism. The terrorist attacks in this country on 11 September serve to remind us that the global village we are living in is under threat from people who do not value human life and democratic values. The Government of Malawi believes that no cause or rationale can justify terrorism as a means of achieving individual or group goals, as such acts result in indiscriminate destruction of human life and property. Clearly, it is evident that no nation will be spared the far-reaching, devastating impact of the attacks of 11 September.

The Government of Malawi unreservedly condemns those acts and pledges its support and cooperation in the fight against such unjustifiable criminal acts. It is our sincere hope that all those responsible for the terrorist attacks on the United States of America and, indeed, elsewhere in the world, will speedily be brought to justice. As we all share sympathy with the victims of the recent terrorist attacks, let us also demonstrate our unanimous resolve to deal with this problem in a decisive and conclusive manner by ratifying or acceding to all conventions aimed at combating terrorism. That will send a strong message to all parts of the world about our common purpose to remove this evil from our midst.

It is common knowledge that terrorist groups and individuals or entities operate in sophisticated networks throughout the world. No country, therefore, can decisively deal with this problem alone. It is imperative that we all pool our resources to resolutely deal with the cancer of terrorism. Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) forms a sound and clear basis on which our cooperation should be anchored. It is abundantly clear that, if this resolution can be seriously implemented, it may effectively frustrate and check terrorist activities.

It will be recalled that the strategic priority of the Millennium Summit held last year was to find ways of reshaping and reorienting the focus of the United Nations that would inspire a renewed and shared sense of universal mission, thereby enabling it to make a real, quantifiable difference in the lives of "We, the peoples" in the new millennium.

And yet, regrettably, one year after that watershed event, the commitments of the Millennium Summit already seem to be anything but what they are — commitments — and to be mere platitudes on the part of the developed countries. The Summit's much-trumpeted visions, goals and collective social

objectives already appear to have been consigned to the same fate of non-fulfilment that has befallen similar, previous commitments of the rich nations.

It is saddening that, at the height of a global integration drive, a shockingly large number of countries remains outside the globalization loop, while a handful of economically powerful countries of the North controls the pace and terms of participation in the global economy, not least the skewed distribution of its benefits. It is equally disheartening to note, in particular, that the African continent is nowhere near attaining even half as much of the benefit that it has strenuously striven for in the global economy. Now more than ever, our continent is fast sliding deeper and deeper into a plight of deteriorating mass poverty.

This situation is aggravated by mounting external debt, crumbling public infrastructure, marginally functional social services, severe environmental degradation, rising illiteracy and the rapid depletion of human resources and the skilled labour force as a result of endless armed conflicts and the devastation caused by epidemics, such as those of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other transmissible infections. These are some of the many issues that we have discussed time and again in this Assembly and other forums, and yet we seem to be getting nowhere.

Clearly, Africa is under the threat of imminent virtual exclusion from the mainstream global economy — more so if the underlying spirit, ideals, goals and commitments of the Millennium Summit are not faithfully upheld to ensure the concrete and effective integration of the developing countries into the global economic framework on terms that reflect a shared future of promise of equality, equity, prosperity for all and a just world.

In spite of all these apprehensions, my delegation is still encouraged by the wide global consensus on a range of major issues of critical concern to the least developed countries of Africa. The positive conclusions reached during the special session on HIV/AIDS and the world Conferences that took place this year — the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the World Conference against Racism and Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance — reflect a newly emerging global recognition that there is an urgent need to begin concretely addressing the issues that will aggressively advance the economic and social progress of the less developed nations. The declarations and programmes of action agreed at those Conferences must be the centrepiece of any genuine international crusade to reduce social and economic disparities and inequalities between the North and the South. Indeed, the persistence of these inequalities and injustices, in our view, is the root cause of the political, economic and social turmoil currently tearing apart the African countries and some parts of the world. Malawi would like to reaffirm its steadfast commitment to the declarations of commitment, actions and programmes agreed at these Conferences.

What the developing countries need is a chance for a fresh start, which can come about only through a comprehensive package of total debt forgiveness that cuts across the existing initiatives for debt relief, including the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. We also need increased technical assistance, enhanced official development assistance and much greater flows of capital resources and foreign direct investment from developed countries.

We would also like to insist on the genuine commitment of the North to the full integration of our economies into globalized markets through the removal of technical obstacles placed in the way of our exports. The United Nations ought to play a leading role in breaking down the walls of protectionism and to sustain the search for measures that can help the poor nations wriggle out of their poverty and vulnerability. This is in line with the spirit of the resolutions and decisions taken at last year's World Summit for Social Development.

I take this opportunity to pay special tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the numerous initiatives that he has undertaken to prevent violent conflicts in Africa and other troubled regions of the world. The recent release to the Security Council of his special report on conflict prevention, which addresses in depth the many issues that arose from the Brahimi report, is one practical demonstration of the Secretary-General's overpowering resolve to ensure that the international community addresses political disputes and tensions before they degenerate into all-out armed confrontations and violent conflicts. These pose a major challenge and real threat to international peace and security.

In the same vein, to effectively tame violent conflicts, the United Nations needs to deal decisively with the problem of the illicit trade and trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Their easy availability, transfer and proliferation remain at the centre of the intractability of violent conflicts, rising insecurity and instability in some parts of Africa.

My delegation is most thankful for the success, albeit measured, achieved during the recent United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In spite of a spirited bid by others to water down the agreed global consensus and programme of action, Africa takes heart in the holding of the Conference itself as a good starting point for putting in place effective measures to curb the immeasurable damage caused by these deadly weapons.

Many evils such as slavery, the slave trade, colonialism, apartheid, genocide, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty and starvation have afflicted the continent of Africa and its people. These evils have been entrenched to such an extent that even the international media only look forward to reporting on the tragedies befalling the continent. However, despite these ills, Africa deserves a special place in the economic, political and social spheres of the world. It is in cognizance of this fact that our leaders, in their quest for a prosperous and dynamic Africa, resolved to transform the Organization of African Unity into the African Union.

The birth of the Union has ushered in the New African Initiative, now renamed the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which seeks to pull Africa out of stagnation and put the continent on a new footing for economic recovery and prosperity as well as for the promotion of human rights and good governance. As a developing region with very limited financial resources, we shall rely on our cooperating partners in order to ensure that our dream for a new Africa is realized. Therefore, I wish to appeal for global support for this noble initiative being espoused by our leaders so that the people of the African continent may see real social, economic and political transformation for the betterment of their lives.

Malawi recently assumed the one-year rotating chairmanship of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). While SADC member States take pride in the relative peace and stability that prevail in much of the subregion, we still have serious concerns about the persistent general economic slowdown and the deterioration of human development in the subregion. SADC is experiencing an unfair share of problems and challenges which require the international community's enhanced generous assistance and good will.

It is common knowledge that SADC is reeling under the pressures of the untold devastation caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is unravelling decades of hard-earned economic gains. The subregion accounts for 75 per cent of the world's total number — that is, 36 million — of people living with deadly HIV/AIDS. SADC's modest average economic growth rate of 3.2 per cent becomes a cause for serious concern when compared with its staggering population growth rate of nearly the same level.

Apart from causing untold human suffering, the continuing civil wars in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — two of the subregion's potential economic powerhouses — have hamstrung every genuine endeavour by SADC to promote itself as a prime destination for foreign capital and investment. Therefore, we call upon the United Nations to step up its efforts to bring pressure to bear on the belligerents in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo so that the ongoing peace initiatives can yield the rich rewards of an early and decisive settlement. We also call upon the international community to continue rendering vital support and cooperation to the peace facilitator in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure that the inter-Congolese dialogue bears fruit and serves to consolidate the gains achieved so far by the United Nations peacekeeping operation and the Lusaka peace process.

SADC would also like to see much more pressure exerted on Jonas Savimbi in order to force UNITA to return to the 1994 Lusaka peace framework. Only the intensification of the United Nations sanctions against UNITA and the punishment of those violating the embargo would genuinely achieve that goal.

The attainment of durable peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola and the removal of tensions in the rest of the subregion would put SADC on a stronger footing for economic recovery and a firmer foundation for sustainable peace, security and tangible economic growth and development.

Time and again, Malawi has spoken in favour of readmission of the Republic of China on Taiwan to United Nations membership, which would grant to that country a well-deserved opportunity for active engagement in international affairs. Malawi finds it grossly unjust that the hard-working and peace-loving people of Taiwan should suffer diplomatic isolation so unnecessarily. Therefore, Malawi would like to appeal to the entire United Nations membership to look beyond narrow political considerations and face up to the geopolitical and economic realities that obtain on both sides of the Taiwan Straits. The diplomatic isolation of Taiwan remains both a curiosity and a contradiction in terms. First, almost every country deals with Taiwan in terms of trade and other forms of bilateral cooperation. Secondly, the isolation of Taiwan violates its people's inalienable right to free association within the framework of the United Nations Charter.

Lastly, let me reaffirm Malawi's trust and confidence in the leadership role of the United Nations in making our world a better place in which to live. I would also like to reaffirm Malawi's unwavering commitment to its obligations and responsibilities as a member of the international community of nations.

The Acting President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Jigmi Yoser Thinley, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bhutan.

Mr. Thinley (Bhutan): I congratulate the President on his assumption of the difficult role of guiding the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. This session is being held during one of the saddest moments in the history of our Organization. Let me assure the President of the full support of my delegation in the discharge of his most important functions.

The twenty-first century will forever be remembered for the fiery hell that engulfed the world on that dark day of a cloudless sky on 11 September. The horrific images of passenger aircraft flying to their doom to cause great death, grief and despair to countless people will always be a scar on our individual and collective memory. Surely, failure to bring to justice those guilty of that crime, and those who follow the same path, would mean our collective submission to an endless reign of terror and to fearful darkness.

It is the wish of the Government and the people of Bhutan that I should, once again, express our solidarity with the Government and the people of the United States and convey our heartfelt sympathy to those who have suffered the irreparable loss of their loved and dear ones. We admire the way in which the people of this great nation have come together to rise to the challenges that the tragic events have left in their wake. We pay tribute to the brave and the selfless who laid down their own lives as they fought to save those of others. Our hearts and minds are with the city of New York, which has not only been a gracious host to the United Nations, but is unparalleled in its generosity in giving shelter, livelihood, hope and joy to people of all races and creeds. Indeed, it came as no surprise that the scale of the tragedy made itself felt not only in the devastatingly high number of victims, but in the fact that people from more than 80 countries were counted among the dead.

A small part of everyone died that day, for reasons that can never be explained or justified. Indeed, human society has been left to ponder its claim to being civilized.

Until the tragedy of 11 September, the threat of terrorism was not fully appreciated. Those who had not felt its demonic wrath tolerated it as just another manifestation of social or political discontent. The current environment throughout the globalized world has harshly and most cruelly removed such misconceptions. People all over the world are losing their freedom, willingly or without choice, in a multitude of ways. And there is a pervasive sense of fear. Freedom is a heavy price to pay for anything. Civilized society ought to provide more liberty, not be cowed into affording less.

The disease that is the cause must be stamped out. A determined and coordinated approach by all countries is the indispensable key. To this end, the United Nations must play the central role. It must inspire, unite and act. It must be behind all individual country, group and global efforts. In this context, the important initiative taken by the Security Council in resolution 1373 (2001) is to be welcomed. However, we must remember that its impact will be determined not so much by the letter as by the spirit with which it is accepted and implemented by all Member States.

For its part, Bhutan will make every effort to fulfil its duty as a Member State and a nation that is fully committed to the eradication of terrorism. Today, I signed the International Convention for the

Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, and in due course our legislature will clear the way for accession to the other conventions relating to international terrorism.

The reign of terrorists in Afghanistan is coming to an end. It is our hope that the healing of the deep and painful wounds suffered interminably by the helpless and innocent victims will begin immediately. We also hope that, in the coming years, they will be able to find the environment of peace and security that has eluded them for too long. Unfortunately, the period of renewal and reconstruction at the individual, community and national levels will be long and arduous for a country that has been reduced to rubble by war and its ravaging companions. We appeal to the international community to give sustained support to Afghanistan in a way that is sympathetic and responsive to its immediate and long-term needs, while respecting fully the dignity of its proud people.

Even as we call for sustained and adequate assistance to Afghanistan, we must acknowledge that the world is still reeling from the aftershocks of the attacks of 11 September. The cumulative impact on a world economy that was already following a downward trend has yet to be seen. There are other disturbing uncertainties. Clearly, there is a need to better define and understand the scope and limits of the war on terrorism so that the fears of the broader clash that is being spoken of are calmed. How do we create a climate that can prevent the further diversion of resources to defence? Will the onslaught be protracted and consumptive in terms of our combined energy and resources? Amid such doubts and concerns, it is natural that we should worry about how the international community might be able to deliver on the hopes that were raised by the Millennium Declaration a year ago. Our capacity to fight HIV/AIDS and poverty becomes questionable, especially within the time frame we have set for ourselves.

Against such a backdrop, the growing challenge will be how to share and give in difficult times. How does one give beyond the bounds of disposable surplus? As the representative of a developing country, I say this without wishing to undermine the greater importance of raising domestic revenues and devoting them to meeting the targets set. In this context, the defining moment will be offered at the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held next year in Mexico.

Now more than ever it is necessary to reform the Security Council. We cannot continue to procrastinate on this vital issue. The Council has to be a truly representative body if it is to be relevant, respected and effective. That is not possible when vast continents and significant populations in the world are left out of crucial decision-making processes on international peace and security. Without fair representation, the Council will risk emasculation — faltering on making decisions that are implemented feebly.

The serious humanitarian, political and economic consequences of the terrorist acts demand unity of thought and action on the part of all nations. Terrorism must be rooted out. Yet, as in the conduct of our everyday life, there is a need for balance and moderation. Just as the reasons for soul-searching and doubt in ourselves as civilized beings are compelling, it is my earnest hope that the success of this session will be marked by the profundity of collective wisdom and commitment to restore lasting security, peace and normality.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ravan Farhâdi, Chairman of the delegation of Afghanistan.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): At the outset, on behalf of the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, and on my own behalf, I wish to express my profound condolences to the Government of the United States of America and the American nation, as well as the families that lost their loved ones in the unfortunate crash of American Airlines flight 857 yesterday.

My delegation is very much delighted at Mr. Han Seung-soo's assumption of the presidency of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly and remains assured that his able conduct will lead the work of this session to its desired end.

My delegation is also very pleased at Secretary-General Kofi Annan's meritorious winning of the Noble Peace Prize this year, I wish to warmly congratulate him and his fellow recipient of the prize, the United Nations itself.

I am very thankful to all delegations that have mentioned the name and the case of Afghanistan and the need for international help to reach Afghanistan.

The appalling events of 11 September and the somewhat lesser-known event of 9 September — the

assassination by suicidal killers of the great Afghan leader Ahmad Shah Massoud — have changed the world. The United Nations, the international community and the world at large are focusing on a new war, the war on terrorism. My Government and the people of Afghanistan denounced the terrorist attacks against the United States and continue to denounce terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We ourselves have been captives and hostages of terrorism longer than most. In fact, during 23 years of war in Afghanistan, Muslim Afghans have not engaged in any terrorist acts. Islam is an integral part of life in Afghanistan and teaches justice and respect for human life and glorifies the dignity of human beings.

I quote from the Holy Koran: "We have bestowed dignity on the children of Adam". (*The Holy Koran, XVII:70*)

Islam, in the tradition of the Abrahamic faiths, places great emphasis on peace, compassion and the value of human life. Thus, Islam should be recognized for the principles upon which it was created and not acts resulting from irresponsible interpretations, which are far from genuine Islam. These irresponsible interpretations are based on primitive and sectarian thinking, especially the retrogressive policies against women, which have no place in Islam.

With the strong, broad global coalition on their side, today the people of Afghanistan have been vindicated in their righteous struggle against terrorism and extremism — a struggle pursued single-handedly but valiantly over the past seven years against the terrorist forces of the Taliban mercenaries and their cross-border and international allies, chief among them since 1996 being Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda terrorist organization.

In this most trying time, when the people of Afghanistan are being liberated from the rule of the Taliban, and when Taliban forces are fleeing strategic cities across our land, including the capital, Kabul, it is evident that the civilian inhabitants of these cities and the people of Afghanistan as a whole, having offered their support to the liberating forces of the Islamic State of Afghanistan's United Front, are deserving in the fullest measure of a Government to which their welfare can be soundly entrusted.

On Tuesday, 13 November, in a series of events rapidly taking shape in and around Kabul, the Taliban mercenaries and their terrorist allies were thought to be holding ground, but abandoned the city in a hasty manner, causing a power vacuum.

With the capital, Kabul, on the verge of chaos and mayhem, the Government forces were left with no option but to dispatch a limited police force to the city. The decision to police the city preceded eyewitness reports of the looting of National Bank assets and the plundering of the city's main currency market and a number of aid agencies by the retreating Taliban forces.

We deeply regret any ill treatment of individuals that may have occurred in isolated cases. We have ordered our security authorities not only to refrain from but to actively investigate any such acts that may have been committed and to prevent such incidents from taking place in the future. Let me reiterate that our desire for peace for all people in our land remains firm and that we will not, now or later, condone any lawless acts aimed at disrupting the crucial process of instituting a broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative Government in Afghanistan, as called for by the United Nations and the entire international community.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan hails the new developments as a victory not only for the people of Afghanistan but also for the international community in our shared campaign against terrorism.

Let me assure the Assembly that the recent gaining of ground by the forces of the Islamic State of Afghanistan's United Front in Kabul in no way reflects an intention on the part of the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan to monopolize power. Rather, it is our sincere hope that the people of Afghanistan will decide democratically in the near future what form of political system they desire. In this context, we steadfastly support United Nations resolutions on Afghanistan, and thereby the recommendations made by the Secretary-General's special envoys to Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi and Ambassador Francesc Vendrell, and will do our utmost for the implementation of the process.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan fully honours its agreement made in Rome with the representatives of the Rome process, led by the former King of Afghanistan, Mohammed Zahir Shah, and remains committed to its implementation.

Today Afghanistan finds itself in a major humanitarian crisis — a crisis such as the world has not

witnessed in recent times. With winter approaching our people are facing famine. Our people will die because they do not have enough food to sustain them through the winter. Many aid agencies began leaving Afghanistan after it became evident that the bombing campaign would begin.

Over the past several years, tens of thousands of civilians have either fled the country or have been internally displaced. The people of Afghanistan are not asking for a favour. They desire first and foremost to return to the position they were in before 1978 — a level playing field where they can govern themselves and grow. Twenty million landmines, a ruined and almost non-existent infrastructure and a very high illiteracy rate do not make for a level playing field. Even a fraction of the benefits bestowed on the international community by Afghan sacrifices can reconstruct our nation.

Today we are charged with finding a solution for Afghanistan, even as problems continue to increase and change on a day-to-day basis. But we must now, not later, think about the people of Afghanistan and about giving them peace after so many years of war.

A broad-based Government, inter alia, through the *Loya Jirga* — Grand Assembly — must be established. All ethnic groups must be equitably and adequately represented and given voice in this broad-based Government. The Hazaras, Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Aimaks, Turkmen, Baluchis and all other ethnic groups of Afghanistan must have fair representation in this broad-based Government.

All these groups make up what Afghanistan is today, and Afghanistan is not complete without any of these groups. For centuries, all of these groups have lived peacefully among themselves without bloodshed, and each one has contributed to Afghanistan and has sacrificed tremendously in the resistance against repeated foreign occupations. For centuries, all these groups, as a united people, resisted foreign hegemonic forces. History has shown that Afghanistan is not for foreign occupation or conquest.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan's United Front wants the rule of law based on Islamic tenets, pluralistic democracy, fundamental human rights, peace, unification and meaningful reconstruction. At our core we wish to uphold human rights for all peoples of our land — men and women. We desire to abide by United Nations resolutions, the rule of law and recognized international norms and principles. We highly appreciate the efforts being made by the United Nations aimed at finding a solution for Afghanistan and support all United Nations endeavours and measures to combat international terrorism.

The future Government of Afghanistan must not be subjected any more to the unilateralism that has blanketed it for so long. The nation of Afghanistan must have, as any nation must have, the respect of and sincere cooperation with its neighbours. The future Government of Afghanistan must not be reduced to a "sphere of influence"; it must be recognized as a sovereign nation in the truest sense. Self-determination for Afghanistan means that no country of the world should have a veto concerning what the Afghans decide for themselves.

Recognition of the principles of mutual respect, non-interference and full sovereignty of Afghanistan will naturally be followed by economic and commercial cooperation. Hence, a sovereign Afghanistan will deploy all efforts to broaden its relations with all of its neighbours, including Pakistan. Such measures as opening up to Pakistan and opening up key transit routes, from north to south and from east to west, ought to be implemented. Afghanistan has to broaden its economic relations with all neighbouring countries. The crossroads at the heart of Asia is situated in Afghanistan, and our country's economic and international development rests largely in utilizing this resource in a progressive and open manner.

I need not remind Members today that a stable Afghanistan means a stable Pakistan and a stable Central Asia. An ignored and ruined Afghanistan would be a calamity for the entire region and the whole world.

The people of Afghanistan must decide what form of Government they desire. No one ethnic group must dominate and no neighbour of Afghanistan has the right to incite, overtly or covertly, one ethnic group against others. It is time for the people of Afghanistan to think about their future and to come together. They must all work together for their country as they have worked for centuries before. It is my aspiration and the aspiration of every Afghan that normalcy will be restored and that we will live in peace.

We, the Islamic State of Afghanistan, and we, the United Nations and the international community, have a duty to rebuild Afghanistan. There must be an

extensive and comprehensive United Nations-led reconstruction plan for Afghanistan. The international community must take the reconstruction of Afghanistan as seriously as it takes the war on terrorism. I submit that reconstruction and a people's hope will do more to eradicate evils such as terrorism and the seeds of terrorism than war can perhaps ever do.

Rehabilitation must begin with addressing humanitarian problems, including the pressing crisis of internally displaced persons and refugees. The longer-term Afghan reconstruction programme must be comprehensive; under such a programme, facilities of all kinds — roads, bridges, hospitals and schools and universities for boys and girls — must be reconstructed. Girls were purposely made illiterate by the Taliban mercenaries. A massive education effort must be undertaken so that our young people can learn skills and grow up to be a new generation for our country. The 20 million landmines must be cleared so that the people can cultivate their land and not have to rely only on poppies to make a living.

In the Afghan reconstruction programme there must be a programme for orphans and widows. The Afghan reconstruction programme must directly help the war-stricken and war-devastated land and people of Afghanistan. Afghans of the diaspora, from all over the world, must come and take part in the Afghan reconstruction programme and help build their country.

I believe that, with the help of almighty God, we can rebuild Afghanistan and that Afghanistan can once again live in peace with its neighbours and can contribute to the prosperity of the international community.

In conclusion, I appeal to the United Nations and to the international community to adopt a new vision for Afghanistan, a vision that will leave behind the death and destruction that has seized its people for so many years, a vision that embraces tolerance and unity, a vision that will rebuild the spirit of Afghanistan and give hope for peace to each and every person of our land. The change must come from each person who calls himself a Muslim and an Afghan; it must also come from each country that calls itself a friend of Afghanistan. Our friends and neighbours must grant us the goodwill to govern ourselves and to be our own people.

The Acting President: I can only wish the best for the representative of Afghanistan, for his people and for his country at this very critical moment in world history.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Abdi Hashi, Chairman of the delegation of Somalia.

Mr. Hashi (Somalia): I seize this opportunity to extend, on behalf of my Government, my warm congratulations to Mr. Han Seung-soo on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. I am confident that, with his experience and profound dedication, he will successfully guide the proceedings of this session. I also avail myself of this opportunity to thank his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Harri Holkeri, for his excellent stewardship of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. May I also extend our warmest congratulations to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, on his election to a second term and on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to him and to the United Nations.

Last year, at the Millennium Summit held here in New York, the President of Somalia, His Excellency Mr. Abdikassim Salad Hassan, stood before the Assembly after Somalia's absence from the international arena for about a decade. That was a moment of historic significance for my country, which continues to strive to emerge from the abyss of conflict and to reassert its position as an active Member of the United Nations. I reiterate our deep gratitude to the international community for welcoming us back into the fold.

In the last century, humanity witnessed great and laudable achievements in the political, scientific, technological and economic fields. Yet, despite those accomplishments, we continue to face challenges that need to be fully addressed. Conflicts are abundant; poverty is rampant; the economic divide between North and South continues to widen; and the scourge of HIV/AIDS remains unabated in the world. Nations around the globe are reeling from the attendant consequences and call for urgent and immediate action.

The events of 11 September shocked the conscience of all decent human beings. We in Somalia relate to the pain and suffering of the people of the United States in a very profound and special way. The Somali people have been subjected to a reign of terror perpetrated by the warlords. We in Somalia, therefore, know very well what it means to lose loved ones. Let me say that those who committed the heinous and

atrocious crimes of 11 September have nothing in common with Islam or with the Islamic faith. Islam preaches peace within one's spiritual self and with one's neighbours; it preaches tolerance and compassion.

Allow me to reiterate our heartfelt and sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and the Government of the United States of America on their tragic loss. We continue to share their grief and pain.

The inhuman terrorist attacks of 11 September brought to the forefront new challenges to international peace and security. Our fight against terrorism must be based on collective action by the international community and on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The immediate and strong response by the Security Council and the General Assembly, including the adoption of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), reflects our collective approach in the fight against terrorism. The Government of Somalia fully supports Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and is firmly committed to translate its provisions into action.

Having said that, I must observe that terrorists will exploit situations of injustice and imbalance as well as conflicts in fragile and unstable States. The international community is under a moral obligation to come to the aid of those States in the form of post-conflict peace-building and national reconstruction so that they do not become vulnerable to the evil forces of terrorism. In that context, we welcome the statement made before the Assembly by His Excellency President George W. Bush, in which he expressed the readiness of the United States Government to extend assistance to those countries that lack adequate resources to combat terrorism. A case in point is the situation in my country, where there was a political vacuum and no Government for a decade.

Mr. Gounaris (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The present Somali Government has been in office for about a year and a few months. It is a Government that inherited destroyed institutions and devastated infrastructure. There are two options before the international community in dealing with the situation in Somalia: watch the country slide back into anarchy and chaos or fully support the struggling Somali State by providing the necessary resources to enable it to play a meaningful role in the fight against terrorism. The Somali Government needs urgent and adequate assistance from the international community to be able to comply with resolution 1373 (2001).

Let me at this juncture address the persistent reports in the media and elsewhere alleging, among other things, the existence of terrorist camps in Somalia. First, I should firmly state that the Somali Government hosts no terrorists nor does it offer bases or training camps for them. My Government has not offered and will not offer them any sanctuary. We will arrest and hand over immediately any known terrorist who comes to our shores. Secondly, we want to challenge the veracity of these reports. It is also important to evaluate objectively the integrity of the sources of this kind of information.

We are a transparent and open society and are more than willing to cooperate fully with the United Nations and with States in this regard. The Somali Government is ready to invite the media and other interested parties to visit our country to verify the facts on the ground. First, we need to see the evidence and establish the facts first. It is a fundamental principle of law and natural justice that every person is presumed innocent until proven guilty. This principle, in our opinion, is equally applicable to States.

In view of my Government's serious concern about these accusations, we propose setting up an international committee of inquiry under the auspices of the United Nations Security Council to investigate these allegations. We also propose that the committee identify Somalia's needs in regard to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). We are fully prepared to cooperate with the proposed committee, if established, in the fulfilment of its mandate.

As I mentioned earlier, the Somali Government has been in office for approximately a year and three months. During this time, the Government has faced daunting challenges, primarily in enhancing security in the capital and others areas. We have succeeded in demobilizing 25,000 militia personnel. We have established police stations and deployed 3,000 police officers in the capital. A judiciary system has been put in place, courts are functioning, and the Government is collecting taxes for the first time in a decade.

The Somali Government continues to search for a lasting peace in Somalia through dialogue with those

outside the Arta process. This is in conformity with the Transitional National Charter and resolutions adopted by regional, subregional and international organizations, as well as the presidential statements of the Security Council on Somalia.

In this regard, let me also refer to the numerous important initiatives that have been launched to promote national reconciliation and peace in Somalia. We extend our profound thanks and appreciation to all those countries that have contributed to the search for peace in Somalia.

Let me, in this regard, pay special tribute to President of the Republic of Djibouti, Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, and Government of Djibouti for their significant, continuous and positive contribution to the national reconciliation process. I would also like to thank Mr. Omer Al-Bashir, President of the Sudan and the current chairman of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), for his consistent support for Somalia and the search for a lasting peace in my country. The United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States and IGAD continue to play a positive role in this regard, for which we thank them.

Finally, I want to express, on behalf of my President, our thanks to President Daniel arap Moi for his recent efforts in bringing peace to Somalia. President Moi's latest initiative was the recent meeting held in Nairobi last month. The meeting brought together the President of Somalia and some of the opposition groups. A joint communiqué was signed, stipulating the principles upon which future talks could be based. We expect a broader-based meeting to be held soon.

In conclusion, let me once again emphasize that Somalia is a struggling country working toward achieving peace. This country needs massive assistance for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of its infrastructure and institutions. We urgently need the assistance and goodwill of the international community. It is my sincere hope that the international community will respond positively and in a timely manner to our appeal for urgent and immediate assistance.

The Acting President: We have just heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Two representatives have requested the floor to exercise the right of reply. May I remind Members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Cengizer (Turkey): Today, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, Mr. Vartan Oskanian, deploring once again the absence of diplomatic relations with neighbouring Turkey, called on Turkey to join in a dialogue, while claiming that Armenia is not willing to permit its tragic past to define its actions in the future.

Unfortunately, what Mr. Oskanian implied today tells us otherwise. Armenia is still willing to usurp an indeed tragic past. Yet the last thing we at this Assembly needed today was the fomenting of hatred. While we do not negate the suffering nor forget the tragedy that befell all the peoples of Anatolia and the Caucasus, we deplore the language Mr. Oskanian chose to employ today. Armenia is haunted by a distorted version of history reflected in its founding documents. It continues to occupy Nagorny-Karabakh and other Azerbaijani territory.

Mr. Papandreou (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

At any rate, Mr. Oskanian's judgements on Turkey are based on falsifications of history. They refuse to this day to see our suffering and fail to acknowledge the responsibility of the senseless radical and revolutionary Armenian leadership of the day for the tragic events which took place. The Armenian Government knows very well the requirements of an honest dialogue and improved relations. Today those elements were absent in the statement made by Mr. Oskanian.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): The issue of the Armenian genocide is not something that needs to be proven. When 2 million people suddenly, in a matter of weeks, disappear from their historic homeland of 3,000 years, that can only be the result of a planned and well-executed genocide. When hundreds of Armenian intellectuals living in Istanbul, including the Armenian members of the Turkish Parliament, are executed

without trial in one day, that can only be the result of genocide. This is absolutely clear. It is clear not only to us but also to a large number of States that have officially recognized and condemned the crime of genocide committed against the Armenian people.

There is one piece of evidence in favour of our position that is more than relevant in the United Nations, and these are the words of Raphael Lemkin, the coiner of the term "genocide" and one of the authors of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. He once said that the international community needed that Convention in order to prevent a recurrence of what happened to the Armenians during the World War I and to Jews during the World War II.

As for the issue of occupying other countries' territories, we believe that the country which itself has committed the crime of aggression and still occupies nearly half of Cyprus has no right to use the turn "occupation" in the United Nations or to use it when speaking about other countries.

Turkey has been using the issue of the Armenian genocide to sabotage all our efforts to normalize our relations with Turkey and to establish good-neighbourly relations between our peoples. Just an hour ago my Foreign Minister repeated his call and confirmed our readiness to engage in a constructive dialogue with Turkey without any preconditions. We hope that this time these calls will not go unanswered.

The Acting President: Turkey has again asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. The second intervention, according to the rules, should be limited to five minutes.

Mr. Cengizer (Turkey): I understand; we can go along these lines with my Armenian colleague, but I will restrain myself to what Professor Bernard Lewis wrote in *Ha'aretz* on 23 January 1998,

> "The Armenians want to benefit from both worlds. On the one hand, they speak with pride of their struggle against Ottoman despotism, while on the other hand they compare their tragedy with the Jewish holocaust."

That is exactly what is taking place right now.

Mr. Boghos-Nubar, a prominent Armenian leader, himself said that during World War One Armenians had been, since the beginning of the war, de facto belligerents. Continuing, he said that they fought alongside the Allies on all fronts.

What I would like to underline here is that Turkey has never denied the suffering of the gifted Armenian race, but the Armenians want us to honour only their dead, while we say that the deaths of both Armenians and Turks, and of other people, should be honoured. I will limit myself to this.

The Acting President: Armenia has again asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): I would like only to draw the attention of my Turkish colleague to the fact that it is not the Armenian side that made the comparison between the Armenian genocide and the Jewish holocaust. As far as I can remember, I was quoting Mr. Raphael Lemkin, the coiner of the term "genocide", who was a well-recognized authority on the issue. As for the suffering of the Turkish side, I think there can be absolutely no comparison between the suffering of the executioner and his victims.

The Acting President: I now see that Cyprus has asked to exercise its right of reply.

Mr. Moushoutas (Cyprus): At the outset, Sir, let me say that I am very happy that you are presiding over this Assembly. I could not sit by and listen to my country's name being mentioned as a victim of occupation and not take the floor. It is indeed occupation. General Assembly resolution 37/253 was adopted in this very Hall. This resolution calls for the withdrawal of the occupation troops from the Republic of Cyprus and calls on all Member States to respect the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of Cyprus. It also calls upon all Member States to help the Republic of Cyprus so that it may exercise its sovereign right over the whole territory of the Republic.

Of course, Turkey has not done that. What is worse is that Turkey itself voted for General Assembly resolution 3212 (XXIX). This very resolution was endorsed by Security Council 365 (1974), which called for the withdrawal of foreign troops. With the audacity that characterizes Turkey, Turkish troops are still in Cyprus.

The Acting President: I am informed that, according to the rules of procedure, the delegation of Armenia has already made two replies. There are no more possibilities.

I call on the representative of Armenia on a point of order.

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): According to the rules of procedure a delegation can exercise its right of reply twice. My delegation had earlier requested the floor to exercise its right of reply with regard to the statement of another delegation, that of the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, which has nothing to do with the debate that was just under way between the Armenian and Turkish delegations. So, I would like to request the floor to exercise my right of reply to the statement of the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan. With your permission, I will continue.

The Acting President: The rules of procedure say that the number of interventions in exercise of the right of reply for any delegation at a given meeting should be limited to two per item. I am a new President, as you know, so I will have to be guided here. We will pause for a minute.

I have now been guided by my very good colleagues. When we refer to "item" here, we are talking about the general debate. Therefore, you have exhausted the two times you can take the floor today. However, I am informed that you can take the floor tomorrow if you wish.

The President in the Chair

Organization of work

The President: I should like to inform members that, as announced in the *Journal* today, on Thursday, 15 November 2001, at 8.30 a.m., the General Committee will meet in Conference Room 4 to consider a request by India, which has been circulated in document A/56/614.

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.